VISIT…

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Supplement

COMPLETE SCOUNDREL™

A Player's Guide to Trickery and Ingenuity

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Introduction

"It's locked," Lidda said, backing away from the heavily bound iron door. Its hundreds of etched demonic faces leered at her.

"Of course it is. That's your job. Deal with it," prodded Regdar, his armor clanking as he shifted impatiently.

"I can't. It's not locked like that. Hennet, you want to give this one a try?"

"Pardon me," the sorcerer whispered as he squeezed past Regdar, whose wide frame filled most of the tight hallway. Stepping in front of Lidda and gesturing his companions back, Hennet flamboyantly produced a wand, a flimsy thing little more than a gnarled twig. He closed his eyes and concentrated for a moment to summon the power inherent in his blood, then focused on the wand. A silent wave of blue sparks washed over the evil-looking door, but as they struck its surface they vanished like rain upon warm stone.

"It's beyond the wand's power," Hennet stated matter-of-factly as the blue light faded. He turned back, skirting past the fighter.

Regdar looked to Lidda with an exasperated shrug. "Well, how do we get by?"

"We look for another way." Annoyance tinged Lidda's voice.

"I could try something," chirped Gimble from the rear. Disbelieving eyes turned toward the brightly dressed bard. With his hands stretched out ahead of him, the gnome forced his way past his doubtful companions. He tossed Lidda a jaunty smirk and a quick raise of his eyebrows as he met her level gaze.

"A little room, please," Gimble said in serious tones, mocking Hennet's dramatic pose. The others stepped back as he put his back between them and the door. The gnome reached into his cloak for a split second, then pressed his hands against the door and began whispering slowly, ominously.

Regdar glanced at Hennet, who arched an eyebrow dubiously. Their misgivings quickly gave way to surprise, though, as a loud creaking echoed through the web-strewn hall. The heavy door swung inward at the gnome's push.

"How'd you—?" Lidda started.

"Old gnome trick." Gimble waved his arms toward the entrance like the most gracious host. "After you."

As his companions passed by cautiously, Hennet fixed the gnome with a sidelong look. Gimble hung back a moment. Deftly, he slipped the palmed stone with its sinister demon face—just like the ones on the door—back into his cloak. He'd found it a few rooms back and pocketed it in case it might prove useful, as it had.

Skipping after his allies, Gimble smiled. They didn't need to know. That was the old gnome trick.

YOUR SCOUNDREL

A lot of the fun of the D&D® game lies in playing iconic individuals and fantasy archetypes: the axe-wielding barbarian, the wise, staff-bearing wizard, the expert sharpshooter elf. All these images hold an identifiable charm. Another classic fantasy figure is the witty rogue who lives by his luck and always comes out on top: the scoundrel. Scoundrels can be wildly different characters, including Bilbo Baggins, Robin Hood, Han Solo and Princess Leia, Sherlock Holmes, Zorro, and Lara Croft. All of them live by their wits, take chances when they must, and land on their feet against all odds. Each has a distinct personality and goals, from solving crimes to committing them, but these characters' methods and outlooks, not their professions or morality, make them scoundrels.

As personas for characters, scoundrels represent a style of play rather than a class. They're the sneaks, the cheats, the bluffers, and the opportunists. They use improvisation and imagination to gain an advantage, exploiting a weakness or a hidden benefit in even the worst situation. Anyone can play a scoundrel. Simply adjust how you prepare for encounters, react to situations, and interact with both NPCs and your fellow PCs. Lawful or chaotic, sword-swinger or spellcaster, scoundrels come in all types.

Scoundrels are also fun and valuable tools for DMs. Whether a skilled but unreliable cheat the PCs can never be sure about, or an entire guild of trained sneaks and thrill-seekers, the scoundrel archetype might enhance a campaign in any number of ways. The versatile new feats, skill tricks, spells, and equipment presented in this book might be just the way to spark a party's imagination and inspire new tactics. By the same token, putting these features in the hands of an opponent NPC allows you to confront even the most experienced player with something never seen before.

WHAT'S INSIDE

Like earlier entries in this series, *Complete Scoundrel* is a resource for players and DMs who wish to add elements of this book's theme to their game.

Chapter 1 introduces the concept of the scoundrel. What does it mean to play a scoundrel, and how can you best craft your scoundrel character? This chapter explores the archetype in detail, giving players and DMs a primer on incorporating the rest of the book's elements in their roleplaying.

The following chapters present new abilities and options for scoundrels of all sorts. Chapter 2 details prestige classes, while Chapter 3 offers many new feats to exploit a situation to the fullest. Chapter 3 also introduces two new rules subsystems: skin-of-your-teeth luck feats and an exciting way to enhance your skills with special tricks.

Chapter 4 presents a variety of new spells designed with the scoundrel in mind. Chapter 5's selection of new equipment—including alchemical, magical, mundane, and even living items—offers an array of useful gear for characters who seek the right tool for every job.

Chapter 6 discusses the scoundrel adventure or campaign, including how to challenge characters who live

by their cleverness and daring. This chapter presents new organizations and contacts to help scoundrels participate in the campaign world, as well as new magical locations to test even the most daring or sneaky characters.

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

Complete Scoundrel makes use of the information in the three D&D core rulebooks—*Player's Handbook, Dungeon Master's Guide,* and *Monster Manual.* In addition, several of the new classes presented in other books in this series—especially the *Complete Adventurer* supplement—find support here. Rules from *Complete Warrior, Dungeon Master's Guide II, Expanded Psionics Handbook,* and *Player's Handbook II* are also referenced and expanded upon. Although possession of any or all of these supplements can enhance your enjoyment of this book, they are not necessary.

SCOUNDREL RESOURCES

Scoundrels abound in fiction and history. If you are looking for inspiration when crafting a scoundrel character, whether as an adventurer or as a challenging villain, consider the following sources.

MYTH AND LEGEND

Various legendary heroes use their wits as well as their brawn to survive and become the founders or patrons of human cultures. Examples include the Sumerian warrior-king Gilgamesh as well as his barbarian companion Enkidu, and heroes of the Trojan War, including Odysseus and Diomedes; trickster figures and gods such as Coyote from Native American legend, Anansi the spider god of West African myth, and China's Nv Wa and the titan Prometheus, both champions of humanity; noble outlaws such as Robin Hood; unlikely knights such as Sir Percival of Holy Grail fame, and knights forced to deal with uncourtly situations, such as Sir Gawain. Modern myth and legend continue to add to this list, as books, films, comics, and even games introduce new characters to our shared culture.

FAMOUS FIGURES FROM HISTORY

America's Old West is filled with personalities who fit various scoundrel archetypes, from the ruthless Doc Holliday to the gambler Wild Bill Hickok to the shrewd rebel leader Cochise. The combination of a wide-open new land, limited law enforcement, and displaced and persecuted natives was a recipe for the rough-and-tumble climate in which scoundrels thrive.

Legendary military leaders sometimes fit the definition of scoundrels, especially those who buck tradition or employ unorthodox tactics. Examples include "Pappy" Boyington of the so-called Black Sheep Squadron and the legendary German pilot Hans-Ulrich Rudel in World War II; the "Desert Fox" Erwin Rommel, who ultimately died for his attempt to assassinate Hitler; Hannibal of Carthage and Fabius Cunctator, whose delaying tactics weakened the Carthaginian army; Shaka, the brilliant tactician and king of the Zulu; Oda Nobunaga, whose cunning, business acumen, and ruthlessness brought his clan to the brink of conquering all Japan; China's first emperor, Qin, who united the Three Kingdoms; and the eloquent Shawnee, Tecumseh.

Con artists, innovators, heads of crime families, and daring criminals are obvious examples of scoundrels: Ronnie Biggs of England's Great Train Robbery, Bonnie and Clyde, Edward Teach ("Blackbeard") and any number of pirates from that period, and Wong Fei Hung, the Chinese martial arts master and cultural hero portrayed in many Hong Kong action films.

BOOKS

The following short bibliography should familiarize you with some classic scoundrels of literature.

Bridge of Birds by Barry Hughart. The wily sage Li Kao, who has "a slight flaw in his character," is a marvelous scoundrel.

The *Conan* novels by Robert E. Howard. The barbarian thief and future king is an iconic scoundrel. In a similar vein is the bloody hero of the Kane novels by Karl Edward Wagner (for example, *Death Angel's Shadow*).

The Hobbit by J.R.R. Tolkein is the origin of the halfling rogue archetype. *The Lord of the Rings* includes many scoundrel characters as well, most notably Aragorn, Merry, and Pippin.

The *Icewind Dale* trilogy and subsequent series by R.A. Salvatore. The unlikely drow hero Drizzt do'Urden must depend on his wits as well as his skill in a world that does not welcome him. His nemesis, the troubled assassin Artemis Entreri, and the ever-scheming Jarlaxle of Menzoberranzan, are also scoundrelly characters.

The Sherlock Holmes mysteries by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and the Judge Dee novels by Robert van Gulik. The latter's Chinese detective character is based on a real magistrate of the T'ang Dynasty, but the stories are entirely fictional in the mold of Sherlock Holmes.

Sunshine by Robin McKinley. The title character, who draws strength from sunlight and must deal with having freed a vampire, is resourceful, independent, and gifted with unusual talents.

The Three Musketeers by Alexandre Dumas. All three of the title characters, as well as d'Artagnan, are excellent scoundrel archetypes.

Tom Jones. Perhaps the most famous scoundrel of literature, the young "foundling" travels through the world, openly indulging his tastes while simultaneously demonstrating loyalty and virtue.

FILMS

Scoundrels are enduring favorites of the silver screen.

Casablanca. Both Rick the bar owner and the corrupt Captain Renault qualify as scoundrels.

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly. The three protagonists: Blondie (the Man with No Name), Angel Eyes, and Tuco "the Rat," all embody different sorts of scoundrels.

The *Matrix* trilogy. Neo, the hacker protagonist, is an obvious scoundrel, but so are Morpheus, Trinity, and the other human rebels.

The *Pirates of the Caribbean* movies. Besides the unforgettable Captain Jack Sparrow, Elizabeth Swann is certainly a scoundrel, as is the cursed pirate Barbossa.

Raiders of the Lost Ark and its sequels. The two-fisted archeologist Indiana Jones is an homage to serial heroes such as the Shadow, the Phantom, and Zorro. (Those movies are also well worth watching.)

The *Star Wars* trilogies. Who isn't a scoundrel in these movies? From bounty hunters such as Boba Fett and Greedo, to the heroes Han Solo and Princess Leia, to villains including Jabba the Hutt and Darth Maul, many characters of the *Star Wars* universe exemplify the scoundrel state of mind.

TELEVISION SHOWS

Even more than in movies, scoundrels abound in broadcast entertainment.

The *Blackadder* series. The main character, played by Rowan Atkinson, portrays a different sort of scoundrel in each of his incarnations, from plotting prince to caustic courtier to disgruntled officer.

Dallas. J.R.—what more needs to be said?

Firefly. The crew of *Serenity* includes a variety of scoundrels, from the noble yet mercenary Captain Malcolm Reynolds, to Shepherd Book, the wandering priest with a mysterious background, to Inara the Companion (who might be the most law-abiding character on the ship). In a similar vein is the earlier *Cowboy Bebop*, an anime SF series about a small crew of bounty hunters.

Have Gun—Will Travel. The mysterious and charming Paladin is a gun-for-hire with his own strict moral code.

House. The antiheroic Dr. Gregory House is a modern Sherlock Holmes in both deductive ability and social withdrawal.

Kung Fu. The wandering hero, Caine, is caught between two cultures and must survive on wit, adaptability, and inner strength.

Mission: Impossible. Incredible situations meet outlandish solutions. Every rogue should see this one.

Remington Steele. Both the title character, a thief who was supposed to be merely a public front for the real private eye, and his creator, Laura Holt, embody many scoundrel qualities.

Star Trek. In the original series, Captain Kirk is a classic example of a leader who follows his instinct rather than the rules when confronted with an unusual situation. Lore from the Next Generation series is an outstanding evil scoundrel.

COMICS AND GRAPHIC NOVELS

From the first caped avengers of the 1930s to the adult-oriented graphic novels of today, comics have been a fitting medium for scoundrels.

DC's *Batman* comics (as well as the many film and television adaptations). This dark and complex hero is the epitome of brains over brawn. Marvel's Spider-Man is a different sort of scoundrel, an everyday guy with a gift but without Bruce Wayne's riches and technological backup. The *X-Men* comics offer yet more examples of scoundrels, including such diverse characters as Wolverine, Mystique, and Magneto.

The *Hellblazer* comics (various authors and artists). John Constantine is an antihero caught between the forces of Heaven and Hell who uses trickery to survive in a world thick with supernatural influence.

The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen by Alan Moore and Kevin O'Neill. This tour de force takes the greatest scoundrels, adventurers, and thinkers of Victorian-era literature and brings them together on a secret mission for the British government.

The *Sandman* series, written by Neil Gaiman. The enigmatic central character is the incarnation of Dream, whose motives are sometimes difficult to understand and whose behavior can be capricious and cruel. Some of the other Immortals, especially Desire and Despair, can be seen as scoundrels as well.

Transmetropolitan, written by Warren Ellis. Spider Jerusalem is a perverse "gonzo" journalist who is the only real voice of the people in a dystopic near-future megacity.

V for Vendetta by Alan Moore and David Lloyd. The strangely noble title character commits terrorist acts, and even torments his young protégée, in the name of freedom and vengeance.

GAMES

The worlds invented for computer and console games include memorable scoundrel characters. The following are just a few examples: Lara Croft from *Tomb Raider*, Master Chief from *Halo*, the nameless space marine of *Doom*, the eponymous hero of the *Prince of Persia* games, and even Mario, the resourceful plumber from *Donkey Kong* and the many *Mario Brothers* games.

And of course, roleplaying games have given us scoundrel classics, both in novels and in published adventures: Tasselhoff Burrfoot from the DRAGONLANCE® *Campaign Setting* and Elminster the rascal archmage of Faerûn are just two. Eberron's Lord of Blades might qualify as a scoundrel as well—a charismatic leader whose true goals are shrouded in mystery.

Illus. by D. Bircham

"He's a card player, gambler, scoundrel. You'd like him."
—Han Solo, *The Empire Strikes Back*

He's the silver-tongued charmer who can finesse his way past even the most intimidating guard. She's the skilled sword-spinner whose mere tap of her blade and slow shake of her head are just as effective as running a man through. He's the sorcerer who crosses his fingers, casts a few spells, and barrels headlong into a volcano. All of these characters are scoundrels: quick-witted cads, death-defying daredevils, improvisers, gamblers, and downright lucky bastards.

Everyone has seen scoundrels, whether in fiction, in movies, or in D&D games. They're the characters who always know just what to say, who act on a whim, and who always manage to see their way through any situation. Confident risk-takers and thrill-seekers, these opportunists break all the rules and still manage to come out on top.

WHAT MAKES A SCOUNDREL?

Who is a scoundrel? Sure, the fast-talking con artist and the charming thief are probably scoundrels. Yet so might be the fleet-footed monk, the veteran warrior, and the cleric of Pelor. Being a scoundrel doesn't have anything to do with a character's class. It's a mindset, a way to play your character, an archetype any PC with any goal might fulfill. Being a scoundrel isn't about thieving, lying, and cheating—though sometimes those tactics come into play. It's about thinking on your feet, taking the big risk, finding opportunities, and doing whatever it takes to get exactly what you want. Whether your character is a skilled pickpocket, a reclusive druid, or a devoted paladin, this chapter tells you how to create and play exactly the scoundrel you want.

The scoundrel mentality and lifestyle revolve around some key elements. While your scoundrel character might not adopt all these philosophies and styles of play, some might aid you or give you ideas on how to make your scoundrel unique.

Scoundrels break rules. Scoundrels aren't always what they appear to be or who they say they are. They warp the truth to obtain their goals, and few are beyond lying when they must or whenever convenient. Breaking rules frequently, but not always, implies breaking laws. Few scoundrels go out of their way to commit crimes or provoke lawful individuals, but they refuse to let an intangible idea prevent them from attaining their goals. Breaking the rules doesn't have to be out of selfishness or

immorality; some scoundrels flout every law on the books to do what they feel is right.

Scoundrels think on their feet. Scoundrels do or say anything to get what they want, reacting to situations with nary a moment's notice. Knowing that an opportunity present in one moment might vanish in the next, they act immediately and deal with the repercussions later. Even in battle, scoundrels constantly look for ways to turn any situation to their advantage.

Scoundrels avoid fair fights. If scoundrels don't have an edge over an opponent or in a situation, they prefer to retreat and try their luck again later. More aggressive scoundrels do everything they can to force an opponent to make a mistake and give them an advantage. Keen-witted scoundrels cunningly manipulate situations to improve their odds.

Scoundrels know their enemies' weaknesses. Scoundrels are quick to seek out and exploit chinks in their opponents' armor. Taking advantage of weakness might be as complex as conning a rich, lovelorn widow, or as simple as stabbing someone who can't defend himself.

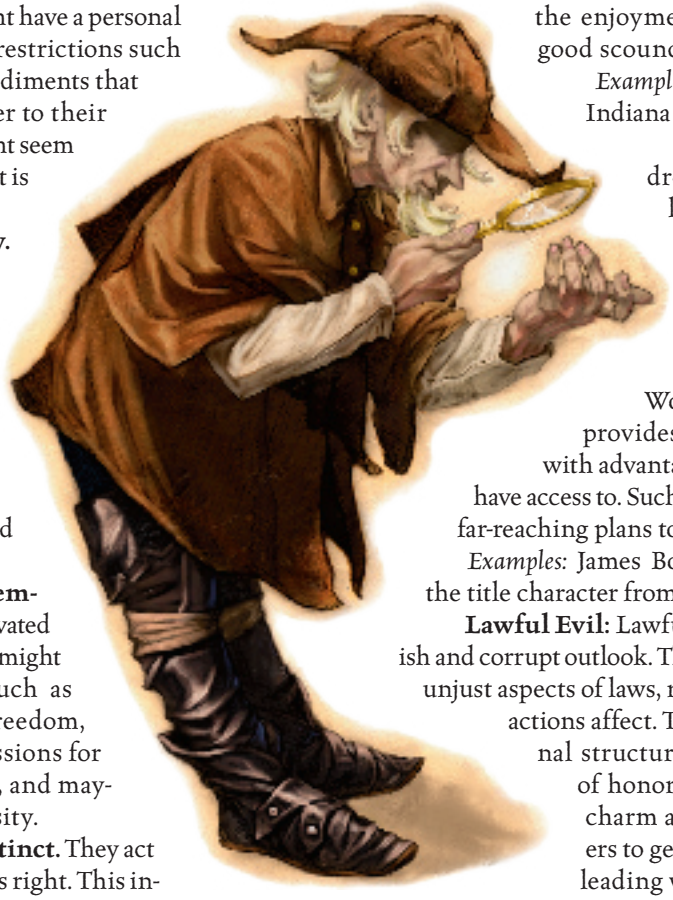
Scoundrels don't restrict themselves. Although a scoundrel might have a personal code of ethics, most view restrictions such as laws and morals as impediments that complicate and add danger to their dealings. This attitude might seem selfish, but for scoundrels it is a necessity of survival.

Scoundrels get dirty. They don't sit back and let others do all their work. They're willing to participate in every aspect of an operation or adventure. Some do this out of arrogant confidence in their skills; others act out of love of a good challenge.

Scoundrels apply themselves. Scoundrels are motivated by drives and desires. These might be specific ambitions, such as money, revenge, love, freedom, or fame, more general passions for action, thrills, adventure, and mayhem, or even mere curiosity.

Scoundrels rely on instinct. They act when they sense the time is right. This instinct might merely be luck, but it is often tempered by experience and an individual scoundrel's sense of a person or situation. Scoundrels consider how others think, or at least guess how they would react in a situation, and from that often anticipate their opponents.

Illus. by R. Gallegos



Some scoundrels turn their skills to more than just greed

Scoundrels are not all corrupt. Although many are less than moral paragons, scoundrels can use deception to right wrongs, trick the unjust, and do away with villains. Even the least materialistic might rob from the rich and give to the poor, or perform similar daring acts of charity.

SCOUNDRELS OF ANY ALIGNMENT

Not all scoundrels are criminals. This section presents scoundrel characters of every D&D alignment, along with well-known examples of each.

Lawful Good: Lawful good scoundrels have their own personal, implacable code of honor and righteousness. They have good intentions, but they aren't above breaking minor rules that get in the way of the greater good, especially when helping the downtrodden. Such scoundrels are likely to form far-reaching plans to benefit themselves and others. The former law enforcer who challenges a corrupt government or an adventurer who wants to liberate great works of art for the enjoyment of the world is a lawful good scoundrel.

Examples: Batman, Dick Tracy, and Indiana Jones.

Lawful Neutral: Scoundrels of this alignment care little for good or evil, using their cunning to uphold the strictures of law or tradition while at the same time manipulating these codes to benefit themselves. Working within these systems provides lawful neutral scoundrels with advantages they wouldn't otherwise have access to. Such scoundrels are likely to form far-reaching plans to help themselves.

Examples: James Bond, Odysseus, and Sanjuro, the title character from *Yojimbo.*

Lawful Evil: Lawful evil scoundrels have a selfish and corrupt outlook. They profit from loopholes and unjust aspects of laws, regardless of whom else their actions affect. They might belong to a criminal structure or follow a perverse code of honor. Such scoundrels use their charm and guile to manipulate others to get what they want, sometimes leading whole organizations or playing groups against one another to gain the greatest benefit.

Examples: Boba Fett of *Star Wars* and Magneto from *X-Men.*

Neutral Good: Scoundrels of this alignment use their talents to do what they judge best at the moment without

regard for legal niceties. They work within the law if doing so is the easiest path, but they are not beholden to it. Neutral good scoundrels are often kind people who get by on their charm or help others through the use of extraordinary skill.

Examples: Zorro and Spider-Man.

Neutral: Scoundrels of this alignment are opportunists. They are concerned with themselves above all others, taking whatever they can get, although not purposely trying to hurt anyone else. Tomb robbers, wheeler-dealer merchants, and other purely selfish scoundrels typify this alignment.

Examples: Lara Croft, Han Solo (at least in his early appearances), and Lucy Westerna from *Dracula*.

Neutral Evil: Scoundrels of this alignment are selfish, taking whatever they can from whomever they wish whenever they can get away with it. Exploiting the needs and fears of others, these scoundrels are remorseless liars and cheaters. Some realize that patience can yield a greater reward than immediate action, and thus might slowly milk a patron or community over a long period. Snake-oil hawkers, cheating gamblers, and cruel brigands represent a few scoundrels of this alignment.

Examples: Mystique from *X-Men* and Sawyer from the *Lost* television show.

Chaotic Good: Chaotic good scoundrels use their skills to help others regardless of the consequences. They act as their conscience dictates without concern for the laws, traditions, or beliefs of others. Such scoundrels are likely to make sacrifices in the hope of attaining some future good. Benevolent brigands, revolutionaries, and other noble rogues possess this alignment.

Examples: Malcolm Reynolds from *Firefly,* Starbuck from *Battlestar Galactica,* and Robin Hood.

Chaotic Neutral: Scoundrels of this alignment have no concept of possession, right, or wrong. They take and do what they want on the slightest whim. They are concerned with their own needs and freedoms over those of anyone else. Chaotic neutral scoundrels are often mercenaries, pirates, or smugglers.

Examples: Captain Jack Sparrow from the *Pirates of the Caribbean* films, Al Swearengen from the *Deadwood* television show, and Snake Plissken from *Escape from New York*.

Chaotic Evil: Scoundrels of this alignment take whatever they can, disregarding the needs of others. Unlikely to plan, they don't think about future necessities or gains but take what's immediately available. Because these scoundrels care for nothing, sometimes not even themselves, they risk everything for even the slightest gain. Such scoundrels might be incorrigible con artists, assassins, or cat burglars.

Examples: Carl Denham from the *King Kong* film and Riddick from *Pitch Black*.

BEHIND THE THRONE

"My lord, this must be decided now!"

"You can't seriously expect the people of the ancient and noble Duchy of Ird to agree to those terms."

"You could always surrender your lands, then, if you feel yourself unfit to sway the opinions of your rabble."

"Wh—what did you say? The people of Ird are of a fine and gallant stock. Had you but one grain of wit you'd know that the fathers of our first great king were Irdmen, and their fathers . . ."

The two governors bickered on and on, just as they had for nearly an hour. With each new surge of outrage their greasy jowls and round bellies flapped wildly. The king had stopped listening long ago, watching the rolls of quaking flab as though gazing into the ocean surf—but these waves brought only renewed contempt and revulsion. He raised his hand for silence, but the nobles argued on. A quiet clearing of the throat was similarly ignored.

"That's enough!" His Majesty rumbled, his voice loud but not enough to echo in the long hall. That silenced them, though neither of them looked to their liege with respect. "I have heard your dispute. I now seek the counsel of silence. Both of you will wait here for my return." Hefting his thick robes, the king rose and departed his throne room, entering the airy and book-lined space of his personal meeting chamber.

His Majesty sat upon one of the overstuffed leather chairs surrounding the hall's large, circular conference table. He doffed his crown and laid his forehead against the cool, polished wood. "I should have the whole lot of them axed," he sighed.

"Then who would send you all those shiny bribes—er, gifts?" came a hissing voice.

The king didn't even look up until he felt a buffet of air and heard the click of tiny claws upon the table. He rolled his head to behold a reptilian visage covered with deep purple scales, fixing him with a pair of cunning, slitted eyes. The cat-sized dragonling had stretched over his crown, propping its long neck over one bejeweled crest, a snakelike tongue flitting from its wide mouth.

"You know I don't care about their baubles." He sighed again. "They keep the best for themselves anyway. The rest of it's just junk they steal from their peasants." The king sat up and flopped against the back of his chair. "I just wish they'd stop fighting and leave. There are better ways for me to waste my time."

"Let them fight," came the sibilant response.

"What?" scoffed the king.

"Go ahead. Why not?"

"They'll be at each other's throats and on to civil war, that's why not."

"So? Rivton is an incompetent, and Ird seeks to put his grandson on the throne. Both are nothing now, but they could soon become threats." The pseudodragon flicked its tongue before continuing. "Let them war against each other. Then, when they're both weakened, sweep them away."

The king's knitted brow slowly unfurrowed. Without a word, His Majesty stood and purposefully strode from the chamber. Smiling broadly, the draconic schemer took to the air, looking for a sunny spot to lie.

It was a good day *not* to be the king.

SCOUNDRELS OF ANY CLASS

The words "scoundrel" and "rogue" have similar meanings, but one does not need to be a member of the rogue character class to be a scoundrel. While rogues often do adopt the lives of daring and cunning common to scoundrels, so can barbarians, bards, rangers, and sorcerers. In fact, nothing prevents members of any class from taking up lives ruled by their own wit and resourcefulness.

Each class from the *Player's Handbook* can be infused with a bit of scoundrel flavor. For more concrete examples on how to build a variety of scoundrels from class archetypes, see Making a Scoundrel on page 12.

Barbarians: Barbarians move fast and strike hard to get what they want, refusing to let anything stand in their way. They are in tune with their instincts and the harsh realities of the world. In the remote wilds, barbarian scoundrels resort to lives of thuggery and brigandage in order to survive. In more civilized environments, they make lives for themselves by putting their uncouth natures to work beneath the veneer of law and justice. Flexing a few muscles and letting out an intimidating roar can get barbarian scoundrels anything they want.

Illus. by F. Vohwinkel

Scoundrels can belong to any class

Bards: Bard scoundrels are talented con artists and manipulators. Using their verbal skill and natural charm, they can influence even the most somber, standoffish, or disagreeable individual with a few sly words and a well-placed smile. Bards have the uncanny ability to sway large groups of people, gain allies, and manipulate opinion, always with an eye toward gaining fame, information, or any other goals they desire. Keen-witted and quick studies, they can formulate plans in mere seconds, relying on general knowledge to find a way around a trap, or more specific information to wield the perfect bargaining chip.

Clerics: Piety often brings with it a certain authority. Wielding a deity's magic and communing with unknowable powers, clerics have knowledge from beyond this world and can draw on belief—both their own and that of others—to get what they want. Clerics of trickster deities or deities that favor cunning, debauchery, and theft often turn to the path of the scoundrel, trusting in their skill and their faith to see them through. Clever worshipers of other divine powers might also take up this path, employing their deities' names to get what they and their extraplanar patrons want.

Druids: Druids tap into ancient and mysterious powers of the earth and control its beasts. Veiled in superstition and rumor, they sometimes use their fearsome reputations to attain their goals. With the ability to turn into a variety of creatures, cunning druids could be anywhere, see anything, and at higher levels, look like anyone. These talents might allow them to infiltrate a community and work the will of nature or their own wills from within.

Fighters: What a sharp word can't accomplish, a sharp blade probably can. Fighter scoundrels excel at finding the weaknesses in their enemies' defenses, using the best fighting ground to make their stands, and setting up ambushes to finish a battle as swiftly and decisively as possible. Outside combat, their heavy armor, powerful weapons, and fierce reputations lend them presence and authority. A fighter scoundrel who uses these advantages might get what he wants without even unsheathing his weapon.

Monks: Daredevils of the highest order, monks attempt feats few other mortals would consider. They can circumvent barriers and attain their goals by mastering little-understood powers to harness their minds and bodies in ways others cannot. Some monk scoundrels, like fighters, use their reputations or displays of their prowess to intimidate, mislead, or simply take what they

want. Others seek out ever greater challenges, daring death and fate again and again to hone their already incredible skills.

Paladins: Paladins make unlikely scoundrels, a common perception they can use to their advantage. Exploiting an enemy's assumptions is not inherently evil, and the greater good might be best served by turning an opponent's weakness against him. Like clerics, paladins wield the mystery and authority provided by their faith, but also bear a heavy load of stereotype and assumption. By acting the expected role, then shedding that façade when it suits them or their deities, paladins can be just as effective scoundrels as members of any other class.

Rangers: Often loners and always deadly, rangers can survive in nearly any environment, vanish and reappear anywhere, and slay powerful creatures—sometimes with a single blow. Tricky, skilled, knowledgeable, and precise, a ranger can guide a person or transport an object anywhere, and is just as talented at tracking and slaying. Rangers have little problem marketing their skills. They can turn their talents and knowledge into gold or anything else they might desire. Their intimacy with nature allows them to attack as boldly as they like, in acts from roadside theft to guerrilla warfare, and then slip back into the wilds unscathed.

Rogues: Jacks-of-all-trades, rogues might be blades-for-hire, manipulators, deceivers, infiltrators, con artists, or nearly any other kind of scoundrel imaginable. With their wide variety of skills, natural charm, and seeming sixth sense about danger, rogues make natural scoundrels.

Sorcerers: Sorcerers have strange powers beyond those of most mortals. They can use these powers directly, or play upon rumors of their superior, otherworldly, or monstrous abilities. Sorcerer scoundrels are just as likely to manipulate and influence others with their reputations and impressive force of personality as with their magic.

Wizards: Like sorcerers, wizards too have influence over strange and powerful forces. Such magic can disguise them, sway minds, or level cities. Wizard scoundrels might pull off intricate con jobs with the simplest of cantrips or use more powerful magic to manipulate the world as they desire.

PLAYING A SCOUNDREL

Although the selfish nature of some makes them difficult allies, many scoundrels excel when supported by talented associates. Knowing that she can do so only much alone, a scoundrel who surrounds herself with colleagues enjoys increased security, additional contacts and resources, and a wider variety of opportunities. Although the chance to take advantage of would-be comrades is difficult to resist, the long-term benefits of such an arrangement hold these impulses in check. When working within a party, scoundrels put their sharp wits, keen minds, and quickness to work in a number of ways.

Resourcefulness: For a scoundrel, resources are more than just gold pieces and equipment. A fighter's sword prowess, a wizard's spellcasting, a cleric's healing magic, a bard's ability to win friends—while not tangible goods, each of these abilities can get the scoundrel and her allies what they want. Whenever a party member is wounded or otherwise incapacitated, those resources are lost to the party. Despite scoundrels' materialistic tendencies, their success depends on the well-being of their allies, giving even the most self-centered cads a prime reason to exploit their associates as little as possible.

Scoundrels are also masters of finding resources on the fly. Imagination can prove more valuable than an army, turning a chandelier into a weapon, a curtain into a rope, and a boat into a battering ram.

Scoundrels overcome obstacles by expending the fewest of their own and the party's resources possible. They might steal needed items or coax information out of an informant rather than paying for those goods. Sneaking past a guard or charming a monster means that valuable spells don't need to be cast and no one risks bodily harm. Such ploys might not always be the easiest way, but weighing chances of success and choosing one danger over another are gambles and educated guesses that keep a scoundrel's life exciting.

Exploiting Weakness: In addition to the resources a scoundrel and his allies possess, an opponent's hindrances or deficiencies can also be put to use. A scoundrel seeks to learn about his enemies and find out what weapons, tactics, and tricks he might use to his

OTHER CLASSES

A number of character classes from other D&D supplements make excellent choices for scoundrels, and some of these classes are mentioned often in these pages. The following are the most common of these classes and the books in which they appear.

Hexblade: *Complete Warrior* 5.
Lurk: *Complete Psionic* 13.
Ninja: *Complete Adventurer* 5.
Psion: *Expanded Psionics Handbook* 19.
Psychic Warrior: *Expanded Psionics Handbook* 24.
Scout: *Complete Adventurer* 10.
Spellthief: *Complete Adventurer* 13.
Swashbuckler: *Complete Warrior* 11.
Warlock: *Complete Arcane* 5.
Wilder: *Expanded Psionics Handbook* 29.

advantage. This research might be as simple as making a few Knowledge checks to reveal a monster's vulnerabilities, or taking the time to perform reconnaissance on enemy headquarters or to discover an opponent's fears and blind spots.

Part of exploiting an enemy's weaknesses is preparation. Whether a scoundrel is fighting monsters of the frozen waste, traveling through the mountains, or dealing with a local bandit lord, a certain amount of forethought helps him make the right choice: a flaming weapon, climbing equipment, or an irresistible bribe.

Improvisation: When a scoundrel can't prepare, she improvises. A scoundrel deals with or extracts herself from a perilous situation by falling back on her instincts and what she knows best. Trusting in experience and skill, a scoundrel rolls with the punches, seeking to salvage what she can from a bad situation while suffering the least physical injury and losing as few resources as possible.

Alertness: A scoundrel's watchfulness and quick wit helps her take the greatest advantage of every situation. Not every obstacle is as obvious as a locked door or an openly hostile opponent. By staying alert, a scoundrel can deal with hidden traps or enemies on her own terms. This trait makes scoundrels seem overly suspicious—and perhaps some are—but most are merely considering how to exploit any situation, and they refuse to ignore their enemies' potential to do the same. On those occasions when a scoundrel is caught unawares, beating a hasty retreat allows her to learn from her mistake, decreases the amount of resources spent haphazardly, and improves her chances of success on her next attempt.

Just as a scoundrel's alertness keeps her wary of threats, it also makes her vigilant for opportunities that others would pass by. Within the depths of some gods-forsaken dungeon, this might mean casting spells and keeping an eye out for secret doors, concealed treasure, or items with hidden value. In society, maximizing opportunities might mean finding the highest-paying buyers, acquiring contacts with lucrative assignments, or cozying up to people in a position of influence.

Even in battle, a scoundrel is skilled at finding ways to maximize benefits for herself and her party. Whether this means casting helpful spells on allies, moving to flank a friend's opponent, employing bardic music, using the aid another action or special attacks such as disarm or trip, the scoundrel knows what her skills are and defers to the specialties of her allies when doing so means surviving or finishing a job as efficiently as possible.

MAKING A SCOUNDREL

Not every scoundrel wears leather armor and conceals a dagger beneath a black silken cloak. Scoundrels come in all shapes and sizes, and they draw their strength from a variety of sources both mundane and magical.

This section discusses how to create a scoundrel character regardless of the abilities she wields. Whether stealthy or brash, nimble or clever, magical or psionic, your would-be scoundrel can glean useful advice from the entries below. These discussions include references to the new skill tricks rules presented in Chapter 3, as well as to other D&D supplements for those readers who have assembled a library of resources.

ACROBATIC SCOUNDREL

Flashy and flexible, the acrobatic scoundrel performs agile acts that leave her victims and other witnesses in awe.

Personality: The acrobatic scoundrel craves attention. You despise performing away from an audience—even if your "performance" includes theft. You put forth a persona for others to admire or hate, but you might lead a mundane life in your downtime.

Strengths: Agility and athletic talent mark the acrobatic scoundrel. Where others see insurmountable obstacles or terrain difficult to navigate, you see opportunities. Acrobatic scoundrels should have high modifiers in Balance, Climb, Jump, and Tumble.

Weaknesses: Acrobatic scoundrels typically lack the larcenous talents of the burglar and the smooth tongue of the con artist. While able to go just about anywhere, you might not be able to finish your task with the same level of grace and sophistication as you demonstrated in reaching your target.

Best Classes: The best classes for an acrobatic scoundrel are those known for their movement skills. Monks, ninjas, rogues, and swashbucklers make up the vast majority of acrobatic scoundrels. Rogues have the skill points to let you maximize all your favorite athletic stunts and still pick up a few larcenous abilities on the side. Monks and ninjas make good acrobatic scoundrels because they have a number of movement-related class features. High-level swashbucklers gain the acrobatic skill mastery class feature, making them excellent tumblers and jumpers even in the heat of battle.

Best Skills: Movement-based skills make up the core repertoire of the acrobatic scoundrel. Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, and especially Jump and Tumble should stay at the top of your skill priorities. They allow you to infiltrate secure locations and evade determined guards, all the while impressing witnesses with your grace and agility.

Best Skill Tricks: The acrobatic scoundrel gains the most benefit from movement tricks (page 82).

Acrobatic Backstab: This trick can help you render an opponent flat-footed. Plus, the trick's name fits in with the character's flavor.

Corner Perch: Get away from your enemies and amaze them at the same time. This trick is useful for gaining the higher ground bonus or darting out of reach to drink a potion.

Extreme Leap: Combine this trick with the great leap of a ninja or fast movement of a monk to jump anywhere you need to go. Adding the Leap of the Heavens feat (*Player's Handbook II*) makes it even better.

Leaping Climber and Wall Jumper: Don't bother with climbing that wall—jump up it! And then drop back down again to truly surprise your enemies.

Slipping Past: Get to where you need to go without worrying about cramped quarters.

Best Feats: These feats are optimal choices for the acrobatic scoundrel.

Ascetic Rogue (*Complete Adventurer*) and *Ascetic Stalker* (page 73): Each of these feats allows you to combine the monk's martial prowess with the rogue's or ninja's stealth.

Combat Acrobat (*PH II*): You don't want to stumble around and look foolish. The feat's name plays right into your scoundrel's archetype as well.

Dodge: While useful in its own right, this feat's true value lies in the other options it opens up (Mobility and Spring Attack). For acrobatic scoundrels with a high speed, consider Expeditious Dodge (*Races of the Wild*) instead.

Freerunner (page 77): This handy feat lets you add more movement tricks to your repertoire.

Leap of the Heavens (*PH II*): Next to Tumble, Jump is your most important skill. Make it look easy.

Lucky Catch (page 79): Just in case that key Jump check fails by 5 or more.

Best Multiclass Combination: Regardless of your main class, a level or two of bard doesn't hurt, and it can help a lot. Not only do bards have a high number of skill points, but all the important acrobatic skills are class skills for them. The real advantage of two bard levels comes from their spell selection. *Expeditious retreat* and *feather fall* in particular can keep you alive and help you shine on the battlefield.

Best Prestige Classes: As its name implies, the thief-acrobat from *Complete Adventurer* fits in perfectly with the acrobatic scoundrel archetype. Another excellent choice is *Complete Warrior*'s dervish, which grants fast movement and the extremely useful ability to take 10 on Jump and Tumble checks. A quirkier choice is the exemplar (*Complete Adventurer*), which puts a heavy emphasis on skill use.

AGGRESSIVE SCOUNDREL

Thug, brigand, ruffian. Unlike other scoundrels, the aggressive scoundrel lacks subtlety and patience. Forethought and planning to him consist of deciding which weapons to bring.

Personality: You don't usually talk much, and when you do you are direct and to the point. You never sugar-coat anything and are typically driven by greed. You take pride in your work and the condition of your gear—especially your weapons.

Strengths: You typically have the highest Strength of all the scoundrel archetypes and rely on your combat prowess to make yourself useful. Don't skimp on Charisma, since a high score helps your Intimidate checks.

Weaknesses: Unsubtle, short-tempered, and often carrying a chip on your shoulder, you look for reasons to fight. Even though you're good at combat, your desire to enter it at every turn can cause headaches for your companions.

Best Classes: Any class with the fighter's base attack progression works well for an aggressive scoundrel, but some are better than others. The barbarian, fighter, and hexblade all make excellent choices, particularly the fighter. Multiclassing between those three classes also makes for a strong representative of the archetype.

Best Skills: You likely don't have many skill points to spend, since combat is your primary focus. Intimidate is the classic aggressive scoundrel skill; invest in it first. Your other skill choices likely depend on your class. Bluff, Climb, Jump, Listen, and Spot are all good options.

Best Skill Tricks: An aggressive scoundrel doesn't have many skill points to spend on tricks, but here are a few useful options.

Never Outnumbered: Use this trick to set your enemies back on their heels.

Speedy Ascent: Coupled with either a good Climb modifier or a high speed, this gets you up and over a wall quickly.

Twisted Charge: This trick is great for surprising foes with a well-timed charge.

Best Feats: More than any other archetype, the aggressive scoundrel relies on fighting ability. Levels in fighter bolster your repertoire of combat feats. The feats you choose define your fighting style. Those mentioned here are optimal choices for the melee-fighting aggressive scoundrel.

Eyes in the Back of Your Head (*Complete Warrior*): You want to be the flanker, not the flanked.

Improved Toughness (*Complete Warrior*): This feat isn't fancy, but if you take even a single level of a class with a Hit Die smaller than d10, you need to increase your survivability. If you plan on being near the front lines, you need all the hit points you can get.

Spring Attack: For the aggressive scoundrel on the go, no feat is better than this. Wear down a heavily armed and armored foe with hit-and-run tactics. Of course, the prerequisite feats for Spring Attack are vital as well.

Staggering Strike (*Complete Adventurer*): Though this feat's prerequisite requires you to multiclass so you can gain sneak attack, the effect is worth it.

Weapon Focus: This feat is an all-around solid choice for any aggressive scoundrel, particularly if you multiclass as a rogue or other class without a fighter's base attack bonus progression.

Best Multiclass Combination: A single level of rogue or scout is an excellent option for the aggressive

scoundrel, particularly if taken at 1st level for the big boost in skill points. The extra damage edge from sneak attack or skirmish fits in perfectly with the class's strengths. While 2nd level in either class isn't terribly exciting, reaching 3rd level can be worth the effort.

Best Prestige Classes: Prestige classes designed to appeal to fighters work well for aggressive scoundrels. The avenging executioner (page 24) offers one way of looking at the aggressive scoundrel, while the night-song enforcer and the streetfighter (both from *Complete Adventurer*) are two more prototypical versions of this character. The outcast champion and the menacing brute (both from *Races of Destiny*) present two racially oriented aggressive scoundrels. The exotic weapon master (*Complete Warrior*) can intimidate foes purely with martial talent.

Variant Options: See the gray guard prestige class (page 40) for guidelines on how to use paladins as aggressive scoundrels.

ARCANE SCOUNDREL

Arcane scoundrels rely almost completely on their spells. The cleverest find creative uses for their familiars as well.

Personality: Arcane scoundrels are often seen as lazy and suspicious, and sometimes as effete or cowardly. You avoid getting your hands dirty, literally and figuratively. Your spells allow you to distance yourself from your illicit acts. You see nonspellcasters as weak pawns or effective patsies, but when they turn against you, you might become a simpering sycophant.

Strengths: The arcane scoundrel is one of the most flexible character archetypes. You can hide behind illusions, use divination to see what others cannot, alter yourself with transmutation to bypass obstacles, teleport into restricted areas, and perform other simple and powerful tasks beyond the abilities of your mundane associates.

Weaknesses: While powerful and adaptable, you lack nonmagical skills and abilities when magic fails. With a low number of skill points, few other class features, and physical frailty, you lose most of your effectiveness when you run out of spells—or worse, are somehow denied them.

Best Classes: The beguiler (from *PH II*) is the ultimate arcane scoundrel, with much of the bard's spell selection but vastly increased versatility. The spellthief also combines arcane spellcasting with significant talents at stealth. Despite their lack of skill points, both wizards and sorcerers can make good arcane scoundrels; as the former, you have the freedom to fine-tune your daily spell selection to fit your immediate needs, while as the latter you enjoy a high Charisma score to complement misdirection skills.

Best Skills: Your first few skill points in each level typically go toward Concentration, Knowledge (arcana), and Spellcraft, since they form the backbone of an arcanist's knowledge. After that, spend your skill points to bolster any skills that you can't replicate with your spells, from Hide and Move Silently to Search and Disable Device.

Best Skill Tricks: A few skill tricks are particularly appropriate for the arcane scoundrel.

Collector of Stories: What spellcaster wouldn't appreciate knowing enemies' weak points?

Conceal Spellcasting: This trick is useful for hiding the *sleep* spell you're casting while standing in front of the guards.

False Theurgy: This can't be beat for avoiding enemy counterspells.

Magical Appraisal: As long as you're stealing the warlord's prized magical treasures, you might as well know what they do.

Best Feats: The following feats are optimal choices for the arcane scoundrel.

Insightful (*Complete Arcane*): The *read magic* spell-like ability might not add much to an arcane scoundrel, but *detect magic* is handy and *detect secret doors* is one of the archetype's more important spells.

Point Blank Shot: This feat and those that build on it are valuable to spellcasters who need to kill or disable opponents quickly, whether by bow or by ray.

Silent Spell and Still Spell: Cast your spells without others knowing it. These feats, especially Silent Spell, are vitally important when you are using your magic to sneak around. Their sudden equivalents in the *Complete Arcane* supplement are just as useful (especially Sudden Silent).

Spell Hand (*Complete Arcane*): *Mage hand* and *open/close* are by far the most important 0-level spells for an arcane scoundrel. The addition of *Tenser's floating disk* is icing on the cake.

Best Spells: As an arcane spellcaster, you rely so heavily on spells that just deciding which ones to prepare or learn can be a daunting task. Because you use spells (a limited resource) in place of repeatable skill checks, you must be sure of the precious few you can cast each day. Learning or preparing the following spells will give you a well-rounded and solid arsenal to choose from. Keep in mind that your class choice might prohibit some options. All spells appear in the *Player's Handbook* unless otherwise noted.

0—*mage hand:* Useful for plucking desired items away from elaborately trapped displays or for "grabbing" objects you wouldn't want to actually touch. The *open/close* spell is only slightly less useful.

1st—*sleep:* Especially good at lower levels when you have no alternatives, *sleep* lets you slip past guards unnoticed. Better yet, if you are discovered and a mass of opponents blocks your escape, this spell can open up a route to freedom.

2nd—*knock:* This is an immensely valuable spell for infiltration early in the arcane scoundrel's career. If you

have enough skill points to master Open Lock, though, choose *invisibility* instead.

3rd—gaseous form: Good for infiltration, escape, and stealth, this spell lets you perform the important activities of a dungeon-exploring scoundrel.

4th—dimension door: This is the ultimate entry and escape spell. Unlike *teleport,* you can use it safely even when in a place for the first time.

5th—dominate person: No need to kill or even trick a guard when you can simply tell him what to do.

6th—antimagic field: This spell is the easiest way to negate a magic trap and render other magical defenses useless.

7th—teleport object: Reaching the treasure is the easy part. Getting out with the treasure is more difficult. Use this spell to send it somewhere secure (or at least remote).

8th—ghostform (*Complete Arcane*): Gain all the advantages of being incorporeal to scout or launch devastating surprise attacks.

9th—wish: If you want to do it, do it!

Best Invocations: Not all arcane scoundrels prepare their spells from spellbooks or are the descendants of dragons. Some make pacts with demons to gain their spells and abilities. The following invocations are particularly useful for arcane scoundrel warlocks.

Least—spiderwalk: Especially before anyone else in your party can cast *fly,* this invocation is the surest and best way to reach places whose main defense is difficult access.

Lesser—flee the scene: Make your escape and leave a distraction. Perfect when events don't go as planned.

Greater—enervating shadow: Ready yourself to ambush someone and punish the curious who come too close. This invocation is particularly useful if you multiclass as a rogue or assassin.

Dark—path of shadow: Yet another evasive invocation, this one lets you escape your enemies and also recover more quickly from whatever injuries they caused you.

Best Multiclass Combination: No matter how powerful you are, eventually you run out of spells or get into a situation in which you can't use magic. When that happens, you need mundane skills to fall back on. Taking a couple of levels of rogue gives you much-needed skill points, as well as the life-saving evasion class feature. If you specialize in rays as your offensive spells, you also enjoy the benefits of the rogue's sneak attack.

Best Prestige Classes: Several good prestige class options exist for the arcane scoundrel. From Chapter 2 of this book alone you can choose from the magical trickster, master of masks, or spellwarp sniper. Other excellent choices include the arcane trickster (a superb choice if multiclassing as a rogue) and assassin. The fatespinner, geometer, and wayfarer guide prestige classes, all from *Complete Arcane,* provide interesting twists on the arcane scoundrel archetype, as do the daggerspell mage and vigilante from *Complete Adventurer.*

Variant Options: The spellthief and hexblade can be exciting choices for arcane scoundrels, if only for a few levels.

CLEVER SCOUNDREL

The clever scoundrel uses personality and wit to gain an edge. Often charming and extroverted, she rarely reveals her true thoughts or lets anyone get too close to her emotionally.

Personality: You like to hide in the open, concealing your motives, and more importantly, your abilities behind your strong personality. You thrive on personal attention but professional anonymity, working hard to make others underestimate you. Ultimately, you see a job as a game to win, and you bring a stacked deck to the table.

Strengths: The clever scoundrel often possesses several well-developed aliases. While most clever scoundrels rely on their wits alone—putting emphasis on skills such as Bluff, Diplomacy, and Disguise—others find ways of supplementing their mundane talents with supernatural ones. Bardic music abilities work particularly well, as do enchantment spells and telepathy powers.

Weaknesses: The clever scoundrel works best around others. In isolation, your abilities are far less useful. You excel in urban settings, but wilderness adventures are anathema to you, and dungeon delves waste your talents.

Best Classes: Bards, rogues, and swashbucklers make the best clever scoundrels. Bards naturally crave the spotlight and possess potent people-affecting powers, making them the best choice for this type of scoundrel. Rogues can learn important social skills and still put ranks into others to help them pull off their missions when no one is looking. Swashbucklers have fewer skill points than bards and rogues, but their personalities, social grace, and luck make them the best fighting class for the archetype.

Best Skills: As a clever scoundrel, you need good modifiers in Bluff, Diplomacy, and Disguise to blend in at all levels of society. Once you have the confidence of your marks, you need Hide and Move Silently to slip away unseen and perform your task. When completing the mission, you need to use skills such as Disable Device, Open Lock, and Search. Sleight of Hand lets you sneak useful tools past the scrutiny of guards and other guests. Bards can get by with fewer distracting skills by relying on their bardic music abilities—particularly *fascinate, suggestion,* and *mass suggestion.*

Best Skill Tricks: Many skill tricks come in handy for the clever scoundrel, and you likely have plenty of skill points to spend on them. Interaction tricks are particularly useful.

Assume Quirk: If you need to pass as a well-known person, this trick is key.

Group Fake-Out: You head left; everyone else looks right.

Social Recovery: This trick is great for correcting the occasional gaffe.

Best Feats: These feats are optimal choices for the clever scoundrel.

Combat Expertise: For the high-Intelligence scoundrel, no combat feat is better than this one. The other feats that require it are pretty good, too.

Daring Outlaw (page 76): This feat makes mixing rogue and swashbuckler levels even more attractive.

Disguise Spell (*Complete Adventurer*) or *Nonverbal Spell* (*Planar Handbook*): Perfect for bards, these feats let you use your spells without blowing your cover.

Merciful Strike (page 79): Clever scoundrels are confidence tricksters and thieves, not murderers. This feat lets you eliminate a threat in a nonlethal manner.

Master Manipulator (*PH II*): This feat puts two potent interpersonal weapons in your arsenal.

Illus. by M. Coimbra

Scoundrels are masters of persuasion

Best Spells: As a clever scoundrel, you need not rely on spells and often cannot use them in the middle of a gathering, but they can nonetheless play a vital role in your success. Here are a few optimal choices; keep in mind that your class choice might prohibit some options. All spells appear in the *Player's Handbook* unless otherwise noted.

1st—disguise self: This is a natural choice for any clever scoundrel attempting to infiltrate a gathering of people of a different social rank. The value of the +10 bonus on Disguise checks cannot be overstated.

2nd—eagle's splendor: The main drawback of this spell is its limited duration, which makes it useful mainly for those all-important first impressions.

3rd—glibness: This spell helps you talk your way out of or into almost any situation.

4th—voice of the dragon (*Spell Compendium*): The skill bonuses and the *suggestion* effect are incredibly useful.

5th—mislead: This spell lasts just long enough to get you out of a dangerous situation.

6th—veil: If you can't go it alone, bring the appropriate backup under appropriate cover.

7th—greater luminous assassin (*PH II*): Though this is a risky spell to cast (you can be caught at any time), the assassin it creates is a very potent distraction.

8th—mind blank: While useful for you, this spell actually favors allies who are less able to bluff their way through an evening's social gathering.

9th—time stop: For those situations when you just need a few seconds to get away.

Best Multiclass Combination: Because you frequently rely on Charisma to overcome obstacles, the sorcerer class is a comfortable fit for your abilities. Being able to cast *charm person* a half-dozen times makes you the darling of any engagement. In addition to your spells, levels of sorcerer grant you a vitally important ally: your familiar, who can surreptitiously spy for you while you're busy socializing.

Best Prestige Classes: You depend on subterfuge and trickery to accomplish your goals. Depending on the social status you wish to portray and the types of missions you undertake, the cloaked dancer and master of masks prestige classes (found in Chapter 2) make excellent choices. The former allows for violent confrontations but requires playing the part of a relatively low-status entertainer, while the latter grants more options for disguises but fewer combat skills. If you prefer a lower profile, the spymaster prestige class from *Complete Adventurer* allows you to mingle unobtrusively and slip away unnoticed.

DIVINE SCOUNDREL

Divine scoundrels fall into two camps: those who worship good deities and those who do not. A good-aligned divine scoundrel often works for a secret organization affiliated with her church's hierarchy, using her knowledge of the underworld to battle the darkest aspects of it. A nongood divine scoundrel probably worships a trickster deity or a patron of murder, lies, or theft.

Personality: Regardless of their alignment and who they worship, divine scoundrels are quiet, confident individuals. If you are good-aligned, you usually hide out in the open, trusting to your station to shield you from prying eyes. If not, you draw back into the

shadows and become as difficult to locate as any mundane scoundrel.

Strengths: Divine scoundrels have many strengths. The divine spellcasting classes are powerful in their own right, giving those who belong to this archetype an advantage. In addition, you usually work for organizations and can tap those groups for support. If you are a follower of a good deity, you have near immunity from local constabularies based on the good works you and your colleagues perform. Who would suspect a cleric of Pelor of a crime when a known thief was spotted in the same area?

Weaknesses: The organization that supports you also restricts you. You must obey your superiors, both worldly and extraplanar. The good divine scoundrel in particular faces a challenge, since you are tasked with performing deeds that fall outside the purview of your faith. In some cases, you must lie, steal, and even kill for the church, all of which probably violate your religion's tenets. This creates a difficult position for you, one that requires frequent *atonement*.

Best Classes: Clerics have the greatest flexibility of all the divine classes, and they dominate the clergy of every religion. They make strong divine scoundrels regardless of deity or alignment. The already stealthy ranger also makes an excellent choice. Outside city walls, druids are the archetype's most numerous representatives, operating as sappers, guerrillas, and, most frequently, spies and scouts.

Best Skills: Like any spellcaster, you need a good Concentration modifier. Knowledge (religion) and Spellcraft are also useful. Diplomacy, often a class skill for divine classes and almost always useful to a scoundrel, is essential. Beyond those, focus on the skills in which mundane scoundrels are expert: Hide and Move Silently. If you still have skill points left over after that, look into other useful skills such as Bluff, Disable Device, Open Lock, and Search.

Best Skill Tricks: If you have a couple of skill points to spare, consider one of these tricks.

Conceal Spellcasting: This trick is even more useful for you than for the arcane scoundrel, because it lets you cast a spell safely while in combat.

Swift Concentration: Concentrate on an ongoing spell while firing off another.

Best Feats: These feats are optimal choices for the divine scoundrel.

Combat Casting: The divine spellcasting classes are not known for their agility or speed, and thus they often end up in the middle of melee combat. Reduce the chances of your vital spells being disrupted.

Companion Spellbond (*PH II*): If you have an animal companion to serve as a scout or distraction, this feat can help you keep it alive or provide it with additional spell benefits.

Hawk's Vision (*Complete Adventurer*): Many of the wild feats come in handy for a druid; the benefit of improved Spot checks is obvious.

Mobile Spellcasting (*Complete Adventurer*): This is a great feat for giving your divine scoundrel extra mobility.

Practiced Spellcaster (*Complete Divine*): A multiclass divine scoundrel needs this feat.

Best Spells: Divine spellcasters have a surprisingly high number of scoundrel-friendly spells to choose from. If you have access to it, you should strongly consider the Trickery domain. It is by far the most useful for scoundrels, and all the spells on its spell list belong in your repertoire. Keep in mind that your class choice might prohibit some options. All spells appear in the *Player's Handbook* unless otherwise noted.

0—*detect poison:* Make yourself popular by uncovering poison in a noble's food or drink. Of course, those who dwell at the higher ends of society should consider using this spell on their own fare as well.

1st—camouflage (*Spell Compendium*): Druids and rangers can be sneaky, too. This spell lets you infiltrate a location with a better than usual chance of being undetected.

2nd—silence: The essential companion to the arcane scoundrel's *invisibility.* The only drawback to this spell is its area—a guard is likely to notice when surrounded by perfect silence.

3rd—dispel magic: Why bother trying to disarm a magic trap when you can simply do away with it safely and permanently?

4th—discern lies: When you know someone is lying, you can look for ways to manipulate him through his falsehoods.

5th—divine agility (*Spell Compendium*): Make yourself or an ally harder to hit and grant a useful feat without meeting its prerequisite.

6th—find the path: An incredibly useful spell even for nonscoundrels. If you know where you have to go, this shows you the way to get there.

7th—true seeing: If you're a druid, by the time you have access to this spell you're going to need it—magically concealed treasure, invisible opponents, and a host of other optical tricks await to thwart your attempts at skulduggery.

8th—discern location: Why go through all the trouble of searching for your target?

9th—miracle: Especially useful if tomb robbing, trickery, and general mischief are parts of your deity's sphere of interest.

Best Wild Shape Forms: One of the strengths of the druid is the wild shape ability. Some forms you can assume are well known as being perfect for combat, but as a scoundrel you often need a stealthy form instead. The following list covers all the sizes of animals a druid can assume. All the animals mentioned here come from the *Monster Manual*.

Tiny—cat: Although other options give you the ability to fly, within cities (where most scoundrels ply their trade) no animal is as ubiquitous, innocuous, and widely permitted as the common house cat. True, a city hosts more rats than cats, but people don't mind having cats around.

Small—eagle: This animal form provides a host of benefits: You can become an eagle from the moment you can use wild shape; you can fly and fight in this form; and eagles live in almost every environment, so you never look out of place.

Medium—riding dog: Most animals of this size stand out in the city environment, making their forms useless for stealth and reconnaissance. For many of the same reasons as the cat, the riding dog makes an excellent choice in cities (and not a bad one for the road, either).

Large—horse (any): Like the cat and the dog, the horse blends into a civilized background. Unlike those animals, horses can go everywhere except dungeons. On the road, in the wild, and in the city, people expect to see horses (although city-dwellers might be surprised to see one bareback, so make sure your friends put a saddle on you). In horse form you can also go into deep cover, allowing yourself to be captured and then providing your allies with the location of those who rustled you. In a desert setting, substitute the camel instead.

Huge—orca: How does something so big blend in? On land, it doesn't. If you're near the ocean, though, taking the form of an orca whale can let you surreptitiously trail a pirate ship or other quarry with little fear of being bothered.

Best Multiclass Combination: Rogue, naturally, is the best multiclass choice for almost all the scoundrel archetypes. Levels in spellthief give you sneak attack (always useful, particularly when it can be used from a position of surprise) and the ability to steal and cast arcane spells, further increasing your already potent flexibility.

Best Prestige Classes: The divine scoundrel archetype is not as frequently explored as its arcane cousin, partially due to the more limited flexibility of divine characters—only those who venerate a trickster deity tend to become scoundrels. Nonetheless, some support does exist in prestige classes. The divine prankster (*Races of Stone*) provides one example of how the divine scoundrel idea can work. Other examples include the black flame zealot, seeker of the Misty Isle, and temple raider of Olidammara from *Complete Divine;* the daggerspell shaper and shadowbane stalker from *Complete Adventurer;* and the magical trickster from Chapter 2 of this book.

PSIONIC SCOUNDREL

The psionic scoundrel uses the power of his mind to accomplish his goals. He trusts no one more than himself, and nothing more than his own brainpower.

Personality: You consider yourself to be superior to normal folk and expect others to recognize that. After all, the mastery of psychic talent isn't easy, so all that hard work deserves a reward, whether voluntarily or involuntarily given. Still, you are more self-reliant than other scoundrels.

Strengths: As a psionic scoundrel, your greatest weapon is your mind. Free from the shackles of arcane rigmarole or divine laws, you are the ultimate in self-sufficiency and freedom. Your powers of stealth, persuasion, and trickery defy understanding by common folk, giving you a great edge.

Weaknesses: Most psionic characters lack skill points and the wide array of class skills needed for a fully functional scoundrel. Focus on a few key skills as much as you can, and select psionic powers that fill a role similar to that of the skills you're neglecting. For example, Climb, Jump, and Tumble are common scoundrel skills, but *psionic levitate*, *dimension swap*, *skate*, and *dimension slide* all accomplish similar effects.

Best Classes: Of all the psionic classes, the psion is the most common and often most effective scoundrel, thanks to the class's broad range of appropriate powers. Telepaths, in particular, make ideal scoundrels. Wilders also can be excellent scoundrels, in part because of their greater array of skills. The lurk is an obvious strong choice as a psionic scoundrel, since the class includes a variety of roguelike class features and skills. A psychic warrior can be effective as a scoundrel, though the class's skill and power selection isn't ideal for the role.

An ardent or a divine mind (*Complete Psionic*) who chooses appropriate mantles can also be a good scoundrel. Ideal mantles for scoundrels of these classes include Communication, Corruption and Madness, Deception, Fate, Freedom, Pain and Suffering, and Time.

Best Skills: Psionic characters don't derive their scoundrel identity from skills, though most have at least one skill that is useful for slipping into or out of a tricky situation (such as Climb or Jump). Max out an interaction skill if you can (Diplomacy for ardents, Bluff or Intimidate for wilders). You'll likely need Concentration for manifesting powers in combat. Every psion has a slightly different array of class skills, but those gained by discipline are ideal scoundrel skills and should be maxed out if possible.

The lurk has a class skill list resembling that of the rogue but only half as many skill points per level, so you'll have to focus on a subset of skills. If you favor the classic scoundrel archetype, you should max out Bluff, Disguise, Hide, and Move Silently, but if you prefer serving as the party's eyes and ears, you'll need a few ranks in Listen and Spot as well.

Best Skill Tricks: Psionic scoundrels usually don't have many skill points to spend on tricks, but if you do, consider these.

Clever Improviser and Opening Tap: The fewer items you carry that look dangerous or suspicious in nature, the more innocuous you seem.

Collector of Stories: Like a spellcaster, you appreciate knowing what powers will or won't work against your enemies.

Best Feats: These feats are optimal choices for the psionic scoundrel. All feats appear in *Expanded Psionics Handbook* unless otherwise noted.

Delay Power: To avoid enemies tagging you as the one messing with their heads, use this metapsionic feat to delay the onset of your powers.

Focused Skill User (*Complete Psionic*): For the psionic scoundrel, this beats any normal skill-boosting feat.

Imprint Stone: Every scoundrel needs the ability to pull a rabbit out of a hat. In your case, replace "hat" with "bag of power stones" and "rabbit" with "exactly the right power to escape the tight spot you're in right now."

Psionic Meditation: Few scoundrels can afford to sit still for an entire round during a fight. This feat effectively gives you an extra standard action in any round when you attempt to focus (or lets you try to focus twice in the same round).

Up the Walls: What scoundrel wouldn't take the opportunity to flee by scampering up a nearby wall?

Two psionic scoundrels

Best Powers: Your choice of powers is crucial, since they largely define your capabilities and can't be changed on a whim. Here are a few optimal choices; keep in mind that your class choice might prohibit some options. All powers appear in *Expanded Psionics Handbook* unless otherwise noted.

1st—conceal thoughts: Not only does this power give you or an ally a bonus when making bald-faced lies (a +10 bonus on Bluff checks against Sense Motive), it also guards against anyone trying to read your thoughts magically or psionically. (A telepath should select *psionic charm* for the ability to make fast friends.)

2nd—cloud mind: This power confers most of the goodness of *invisibility* plus a ton of useful extras.

3rd—time hop: When you're being chased, disappearing from existence for a couple of rounds is nearly as good as *teleport*—plus this power affects your enemies, too! (A telepath should select *psionic suggestion*, which is the iconic power for psionic scoundrels.)

4th—implanted suggestion (*Complete Psionic*): This power is equally great for covering your tracks and for gaining an edge before a key encounter. (A telepath should select *psionic modify memory*, since he likely already has the *psionic suggestion* power.)

5th—anticipatory strike (*Complete Psionic*): Timing's the secret not just to good comedy but also to putting one over on your opponent. Taking a key action out of turn can swing a battle. (A telepath should select *mind probe*, another iconic power for psionic scoundrels.)

6th—temporal acceleration: This power can let you prepare for an unexpected fight or just run away to fight another day. (Psychic warriors should select *inconstant location* from *Complete Psionic* instead, allowing them to teleport all over the battlefield.)

7th—personal mind blank: The loss of useful mind-affecting benefits from allies is often worth the immunity to your enemies' brain-blasting effects.

8th—shadow body: Short of teleportation powers, few psionic abilities are more effective for sneaking into or out of secure locations . . .

9th—psionic etherealness: . . . Except perhaps for this one, which has the added benefit of bringing along your allies.

Best Multiclass Combination: The optimal multiclass combination for a psionic scoundrel depends largely on the key ability score for your psionic powers.

Psions rely on Intelligence for bonus power points and save DCs, so they tend to have more skill points than they can spend on their limited skill selection. Picking up even a single level in a class with lots of class skills allows you to keep the ranks of one or two of those skills unusually high. Rogue is usually the best option, though if you want to use your high Intelligence to become the party expert, bard gives access to all Knowledge skills.

Illus. by K. Tanner

For a psychic warrior, ardent, or divine mind, two levels of ninja provide a good array of stealth-based skills, the ability to turn invisible, and the ability to add your bonus from Wisdom (likely one of your higher ability scores) to AC.

As Charisma-based manifesters, the wilder and the lurk benefit from picking up a level in a class with Charisma-based skills; either rogue or bard is a good choice. The spellthief is another interesting option, particularly if you also select the Psithief feat (page 80).

Best Prestige Classes: The shadowmind (*Complete Adventurer*) is ideal for the psionic scoundrel focusing on stealth. The ebon saint (*Complete Psionic*) fits well for a scoundrel willing to dedicate himself to a cause. Psionic scoundrels with no regard for personal freedoms find the thrallherd (*Expanded Psionic Handbook*) ideal, though such characters might drift over time from being scoundrels to near-warlords.

Variant Options: Though most consider the soulknife a psionic character, the class actually has very little in common with others of that ilk. A soulknife scoundrel functions best either as an acrobatic, swashbuckling rascal—with ranks in Climb, Jump, and Tumble and feats to match—or as a master of stealth, focusing on Hide, Listen, Move Silently, and Spot. See the acrobatic and stealthy scoundrel archetypes in this chapter for more advice.

RINGMASTER

The ringmaster forms a menagerie of useful and helpful animals, which she uses as spies, scouts, thieves, and—in extreme cases—murderers. She trusts their ubiquitous and nonthreatening presence to put them into places she cannot reach. Taken to the extreme, the ringmaster cares little for her fellow humanoids.

Personality: Often an extreme introvert, you find better companionship and more meaningful relationships with animals than with people. You can dispassionately watch a fellow humanoid writhe in pain before finally dying, but you rage and weep when seeing the smallest wound on an animal. Not all ringmasters are so antisocial, but all share at least a little of this bizarre trait.

Strengths: As the head of an organization of sorts, you place multiple layers of separation between yourself and whatever crime or con you devise. Often cunning and charismatic (more around animals than people), you are a strong planner and a loyal friend. Because of your menagerie, you can perform (or rather, orchestrate) a number of different tasks simultaneously. Your wide network gives you dozens, if not hundreds, of informants.

Weaknesses: Alone, a ringmaster is weak. You can do very little when separated from your animal servitors.

Best Classes: Those classes with abilities aimed at animals, such as druids and rangers, make the best ringmasters. The druid's animal companion is tougher than a ranger's, and druids have more access to animal-affecting spells, although the ranger has a wider choice of skills.

Best Skills: Handle Animal and Ride are, not surprisingly, the best skills for a ringmaster. You should maintain them at the maximum ranks possible, even if you multiclass. Of only slightly less importance, Knowledge (nature) allows you to identify new animals and to discern which kinds might be common (and therefore unobtrusive) in any given setting.

Best Skill Tricks: Most skill tricks don't apply to your area of expertise, but a few can come in handy.

Clarity of Vision: This trick lets you pinpoint invisible enemies, saving your animal friends the actions needed to track them down.

Dismount Attack: If you ride a mount, this trick lets you deliver a potent charge.

Healing Hands: Sometimes you'll want to save your precious *cure wounds* spells for more important tasks.

Best Feats: These feats are optimal choices for a ringmaster.

Augment Summoning: When you summon a menagerie of helpers, they should be the best.

Companion Spellbond (PH II): Keep your animal companion alive and bolster it with spells that improve its survivability and help it avoid detection.

Natural Bond (*Complete Adventurer*): This feat is especially important for rangers or multiclass ringmasters, because it gives you the most powerful animal companion possible.

Best Spells: Ringmasters are druids or rangers (possibly multiclass), or at least have some connection with nature through a class or prestige class feature. All the *summon nature's ally* spells are automatically recommended. In addition to those nine, the following spells are particularly useful and important. Keep in mind that your class choice might prohibit some options. All spells appear in the *Player's Handbook* unless otherwise noted.

0—*naturewatch* (*Complete Divine*): As a ringmaster, you are always concerned about the welfare of your animals, and this spell lets you know in a moment the condition of each.

1st—speak with animals: This is the core spell of the ringmaster archetype. Use it to instruct your menagerie.

2nd—reduce animal: This spell increases your options on a vast scale. You can sneak an animal into a secure location, bring along a trusted companion too large to otherwise fit (such as a horse in a dungeon), send a Tiny scout into a place too small for it to fit normally, and so on.

3rd—dominate animal: Sometimes you need an animal to perform an action exactly, with no mistakes. When communicating simple concepts fails, this spell succeeds.

It's also handy for eliminating a hostile animal without hurting it.

4th—giant vermin: Not all the members of your menagerie need be animals. Carry a jar of spiders and use this spell to make them into terrifying combatants.

5th—animal growth: The only thing more frightening than an angry tiger is an enlarged angry tiger.

6th—mass bear's endurance: Keep your menagerie alive in a fight. If you're concerned more with offense than survival, try *mass bull's strength* instead.

7th—animate plants: Supplement your collection of loyal fauna with equally loyal flora.

8th—mass awaken (*Complete Divine*): The ringmaster's ideal spell, use this to surround yourself with a group of friendly animals smart enough to speak with you.

9th—shapechange: Beyond the wild shape class feature, this spell lets you take the form of any animal, from the smallest shrew to the biggest whale. You can also take on dire forms of animals.

Best Wild Shape Forms: Ringmasters are druids, or at least take enough levels of druid to gain wild shape. If you wish to be stealthy, the animals mentioned for the divine scoundrel (page 16) make the best choices. In a fight, though, you need something different.

Tiny—viper: If all the other combatants are Tiny or smaller, and the situation makes larger forms difficult to use, you can't go far wrong with the Tiny viper's high attack bonus and poison.

Small—eagle: The badger is a tough fighter, but you can't overlook the huge advantage of flight. The eagle is a good choice if the situation precludes using a bigger creature.

Medium—wolverine: The wolf is popular, but the wolverine is powerful. Burrow and climb speeds make it hard to escape from, and the rage ability makes it frightening in combat.

Large—tiger: You're a tiger; what else is there to say? Pounce and rake are dangerous and sometimes underrated abilities.

Huge—elephant: This is a pretty easy choice, since you have few at this size. The Huge viper is tempting for its venomous bite, but the elephant has more hit points, is faster, and deals more damage (and can trample).

Best Multiclass Combination: Levels in sorcerer (and eventually, mystic theurge) give you access to yet another animal (your familiar), the greater variety offered in the *summon monster* spells, and helpful protective and offensive magic.

Best Prestige Classes: The beastmaster is tailor-made for this archetype, while the animal lord provides another interesting option; both are from *Complete Adventurer.*

Variant Options: You can build this archetype with the sorcerer or wizard to focus on outsiders and other extraplanar creatures rather than animals.

STEALTHY SCOUNDREL

The stealthy scoundrel conceals himself in shadows. He is quiet, tricky, and resourceful.

Personality: Whereas the clever scoundrel thrives on attention, you hide from it. Usually introverted and retiring, you let others take the spotlight while you skulk about in the resulting shadows. You like to blend in and hate drawing attention to yourself.

Strengths: As a stealthy scoundrel, you work exceptionally well in small groups, especially with characters who can distract foes away from you. Sneak attack and similar precision-based attacks make you a force to be reckoned with in combat. Outside of battle, trapfinding and trap sense let you fill a vital role.

Weaknesses: Creatures with supernaturally keen senses and those immune to extra damage from sneak attacks can render a stealthy scoundrel useless in combat. Magic items that further mask your presence or that aid in dealing damage help to minimize that vulnerability.

Best Classes: Ninjas, rogues, and scouts rely on stealth and deliver powerful precision-based attacks, so they make the best stealthy scoundrels. Of the three, rogue is the most popular choice.

Best Skills: Obviously, a stealthy scoundrel must focus on stealth. Hide and Move Silently are your highest priority. For those times when stealth fails or when you simply need to escape, you should also keep Climb and Tumble at or near maximum ranks.

Best Skill Tricks: Plenty of the skill tricks in Chapter 3 are of great use to the stealthy scoundrel, and your class gives you plenty of skill points to spend on them.

Point it Out: Honestly, is there anything more frustrating than your allies not being able to see what's right in front of their faces?

Shrouded Dance: A moment of concealment can spell the difference between victory and defeat.

Timely Misdirection: A great trick for establishing the most effective position against an enemy.

Best Feats: These feats are optimal choices for the stealthy scoundrel.

Improved Diversion (*Complete Adventurer*): Distract your foe long enough for you to flee the scene.

Lucky Start (page 79): Going first is good. Protect yourself from an unlucky initiative check with this handy feat.

Quick Reconnoiter (*Complete Adventurer*): Almost as important as staying quiet is the ability to spot guards and potential witnesses before they spot you. This feat's initiative check bonus gives you a chance to take out those who detect you before they can raise the alarm.

Silent Spell and Still Spell: If you have spellcasting levels or rely on scrolls, you need to avoid drawing undue attention to yourself.

Persistent Attacker (page 80): Once you've delivered a sneak attack, this feat lets the gift keep on giving. In fact,

all the ambush feats introduced in Chapter 3 are excellent choices for a stealthy scoundrel.

Best Spells: Although you rarely use spells to accomplish your missions, you are as unpredictable as any other scoundrel. A high-level wizard, for example, makes a formidable and nigh undetectable stealthy scoundrel.

The following spells, particularly the lower-level ones, are vitally important to a spellcasting stealthy scoundrel. However, the ability to cast higher-level spells requires a substantial commitment to a spellcasting class. Keep in mind that your class choice might prohibit some options. All spells appear in the *Player's Handbook* unless otherwise noted.

0—*ghost sound:* Do not overlook the importance of distracting guards with phantom noises.

1st—expeditious retreat: You can move only half your speed without taking a penalty on Hide and Move Silently checks. Why not boost your speed and make that half go farther?

2nd—invisibility: By far the most important spell in a stealthy scoundrel's arsenal, *invisibility* lets you concentrate on moving soundlessly while remaining comfortably concealed behind a veil of magic.

3rd—nondetection: Even the stealthiest scoundrel can be spotted with the aid of magic. This spell helps even out things a little.

4th—greater invisibility: If a little invisibility is good, a lot is better. Launch those sneak attacks without fear of blowing your cover.

5th—symbol of sleep: If you fear guards discovering that you passed by a certain area, ward it with this excellent nonlethal deterrent.

6th—mislead: All the benefits of *invisibility* plus a built-in distraction.

7th—ethereal jaunt: Walls? What walls? The spell also grants the benefit of *invisibility.*

8th—greater celerity (*PH II*): Whether in a desperate fight after being caught or attempting a time-consuming act when time is running low, *greater celerity* grants you an immediate edge. The drawback (being dazed for a round) might mean your doom, however, so use this spell carefully.

9th—etherealness: This spell gives the benefit of *ethereal jaunt,* plus it lasts longer and you can bring backup.

Best Multiclass Combination: Spellcasting classes can deliver a vital boost to the capabilities of a stealthy scoundrel, and the wizard excels at the role of stealthy spellcaster. The class's main strength is flexibility: A wizard can cast a wider variety of spells than a sorcerer, letting you adapt to rapidly changing or worsening conditions. Wizards gain higher-level spells faster than sorcerers as well, so if you merely dabble in wizardry, you need just three class levels to gain the all-important *invisibility.*

Best Prestige Classes: Stealth-focused prestige classes abound, from the assassin and shadowdancer in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* to the whisperknife from *Races of the Wild.* Any prestige class that focuses on stealth makes an excellent choice; the difficulty lies not in finding an appropriate prestige class but in finding the one that does exactly what you wish to do. In addition to those above, *Complete Adventurer* provides the daggerspell mage, dungeon delver, ghost-faced killer, highland stalker, nightsong enforcer, nightsong infiltrator, shadowbane stalker, shadowmind, spymaster, and thief-acrobat. For a slightly different take, turn to *Complete Warrior's* darkwood stalker or invisible blade.

The avenging executioner, cloaked dancer, and master of masks from Chapter 2 all represent a different take on the stealthy scoundrel. Rather than lurking in the shadows, these characters specialize in unexpected strikes made from behind a carefully crafted veneer.

Variant Options: Clerics with access to the Trickery domain are surprisingly effective stealthy scoundrels.

FIVE FEATS FOR EVERY SCOUNDREL

In addition to the specific feats in this chapter's scoundrel archetype descriptions, a few feats bear mention as good choices for all scoundrels. Regardless of your character's predilection, these feats should be on your short list of options.

Dash (*Complete Warrior*): Every scoundrel has, at one time or another, found himself 5 feet away from his ideal spot. This feat lets you turn those dreams of perfect position into reality.

Improved Initiative: Winning initiative is crucial, whether to neutralize an enemy before the fight begins or to flee safely from an unwanted battle. This feat can make the difference between a quick victory and an ugly defeat.

Force of Personality (*Complete Adventurer*): Ironically, scoundrels share a weakness against enemies that mess with their heads. If you're sick of your silver-tongued charmer being controlled by the DM, this feat (which lets you add your Charisma modifier instead of your Wisdom modifier to saves against mind-affecting spells and abilities) might be what you need. In the long run, it's a better option than Iron Will.

Open Minded (*Complete Adventurer, Expanded Psionics Handbook*): If you're trying to play a scoundrel with fewer than 5 or 6 skill points per level, this feat is incredibly useful. Even someone with plenty of skill points can see the value of 5 more.

Weapon Finesse: Scoundrels aren't the strongest characters around, but good Dexterity scores are pretty common. This feat is an efficient way to boost your melee accuracy.

Illus. by D. Bircham

Prestige classes offer an excellent way for scoundrels to further expand on their myriad abilities or to become expert in a particular field. Just as characters of all classes can be scoundrels, all can benefit from the prestige classes presented in this chapter. Some of these classes also draw on two new rule sets introduced in Chapter 3: luck feats and skill tricks.

CHOOSING A PRESTIGE CLASS

Whether you are creating a new character, advancing a beloved old character, or designing an antagonist to challenge the party, consider the nuances of each prestige class in this chapter. Knowing what you want to do with your scoundrel can help you choose which prestige class to take; the following short descriptions will guide you to the proper path.

Bad Guys/Good Guys: Members of these prestige classes are defined first by their alignment or their outlook on the world, then by their other abilities. Roleplaying one of these characters means putting attitude first.

Melee: Scoundrels who seek out melee are relatively rare, but those who do so often enter these prestige classes, which typically offer sneak attacks and similar precision-based attacks.

Ranged: The role of ranged attacker is more comfortable for most scoundrels, letting them exploit their specialties while reducing the chance of being slaughtered by a burly foe.

Magical: Characters entering these prestige classes rely on magic (or psionics) to power their primary abilities, though they might have more mundane class features as well.

Sneaky: Exploiting the quintessential quality of the scoundrel, sneaky prestige classes focus on moving unseen through enemy territory or making devastating surprise attacks on the heels of a distraction. While nearly any scoundrel-oriented prestige class is somewhat stealthy, these take the concept to its ultimate expression.

Support: These prestige classes are best at gathering and disseminating information or using their abilities to help other characters. Some also have strong combat abilities in their own right, but battle is not generally their primary role.

Tricky: Luck feats and skill tricks let scoundrels pull off stunts that other characters can't hope to achieve. The prestige classes in this category use one or the other of these new rules subsystems.

Table 2–1: Prestige Class Categories

Category	Prestige Classes
Bad guys	Avenging executioner
Good guys	Gray guard, malconvoker
Melee	Avenging executioner, gray guard
Ranged	Spellwarp sniper
Magical	Magical trickster, malconvoker, spellwarp sniper
Sneaky	Avenging executioner, cloaked dancer, master of masks, mountebank
Support	Combat trapsmith, master of masks, psibond agent
Tricky	Battle trickster, fortune's friend, magical trickster, uncanny trickster

AVENGING EXECUTIONER

"Scream. Scream like you made me scream."

—Peck, the Swan Street Slicer

In the broken hearts and shattered dreams of the tragically wronged, seeds of vengeance take root. Avenging executioners are victims pushed past the limits of endurance who hunt sentient creatures out of a need for justice. Relentless and inventive, these stalkers wield psychology as deftly as their weapons. The fear they inspire can be even more deadly then their rusted blades.

BECOMING AN AVENGING EXECUTIONER

Hatred so intense as to be obsession inspires an avenging executioner to take up his bloody path. Rangers who have suffered mind-shattering tragedies might be compelled to choose fellow humanoids as their favored enemies. Rogues who turn to the path of vengeance use their lethal precision to dreadful effect. Druids who have seen their lands despoiled and sorcerers or wizards who have been victims of witch hunts might turn their spells toward revenge. Any individual so driven can excel as an avenging executioner, regardless of class.

Entry Requirements

Alignment: Any nongood.
Base Attack Bonus: +5.
Skills: Hide 4 ranks, Intimidate 6 ranks, Move Silently 4 ranks.
Special: Must have been tragically wronged in some manner.

CLASS FEATURES

Hardened and tenacious, you use surprise and dread to weaken the subjects of your hatred.

Bloody Blade (Ex): The fury of your attack is terrifying to see. Whenever you deal sudden strike damage (see below) with a melee weapon, the target of the sudden strike and all opponents within 30 feet of you who can see the target are shaken for a number of rounds equal to your avenging executioner level. A successful Will save (DC 10 + your avenging executioner level + your Cha modifier) negates this effect. Creatures whose HD exceed your character level are not affected. Bloody blade is a mind-affecting fear ability.

Table 2–2: The Avenging Executioner — **Hit Die: d8**

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+0	+2	+2	Bloody blade, sudden strike +1d6
2nd	+1	+0	+3	+3	Rapid intimidation
3rd	+2	+1	+3	+3	Sudden strike +2d6
4th	+3	+1	+4	+4	Dread blade
5th	+3	+1	+4	+4	Bloody murder, sudden strike +3d6

Class Skills (6 + Int modifier per level): Balance, Bluff, Climb, Craft, Disguise, Escape Artist, Hide, Intimidate, Jump, Listen, Move Silently, Open Lock, Profession, Spot, Use Rope.

BIRDMEN AND ROBBING

POSTED, by the Duskgate Watch Captain.

The Warbling Blades silversmithy was the scene of a robbery as daring as it is puzzling in today's early morning hours. Owner Temril Tomay and his son reported a waste bin was thrown through the display window of their shop on Redwind Road by an unknown vandal, shattering the glass and laying bare several hundred gold kings' worth of silverwork and jewelry. Remarkably, nothing was stolen at this point.

The city watch was summoned. While the Tomays waited for the patrol, the sound of numerous quick explosions was heard from Duskgate Road a mere block away, followed by the sound of watch whistles being blown. The noise attracted the attention of numerous citizens, including the Tomays, who left their vandalized and only hastily repaired shop to investigate. The patrol heading to the Warbling Blades also diverted to answer the whistles, which are issued exclusively to the city watch.

On reaching the scene, the patrol found no source of the explosions and no guards who had sounded the watch whistles. The watch dispersed the crowd and returned with the Tomays to their defaced shop. Upon arriving, they found the shop nearly emptied, with silver merchandise valued at upward of 300 platinum emperors missing. Answers given by the Tomays during questioning suggested few suspects, but watch investigators did discover several abnormally long black feathers at the crime scene. Eyewitnesses also reported that three black-clad figures wearing masks with ridiculously long noses had entered and then swiftly left the Warbling Blades not long after the strange sounds on Duskgate Road. Several vendors on Duskgate also noted a fourth masked and shrouded figure entering a nearby alley from which the strange sounds seemed to emanate not long before the incident.

Members of the watch wish to question these masked "birdmen." Anyone seeing figures matching this description should alert the nearest patrol.

Sudden Strike (Ex): If you can catch an opponent when he is unable to defend himself effectively from your attack, you can strike a vital spot for extra damage. See the ninja's sudden strike class feature in the sidebar below.

Rapid Intimidation (Ex): Beginning at 2nd level, you can attempt to demoralize an opponent as a move action instead of a standard action. See the Intimidate skill (PH 77) for details.

If you have the favored enemy class feature, you can add your favored enemy bonus to Intimidate checks made to demoralize foes of the chosen type (and subtype, if applicable).

Dread Blade (Ex): Starting at 4th level, you can exploit the terror you inspire to further brutalize your target. You treat shaken, frightened, or panicked creatures as flat-footed for the purpose of dealing sudden strike damage.

Bloody Murder (Ex): Starting at 5th level, if you deal enough damage with a melee attack to drop a creature (typically by reducing it to below 0 hit points or killing it), all enemies within 30 feet of you who can see the target become frightened for 1 round. A successful Will save (DC 10 + your avenging executioner level + your Cha modifier) lessens the effect to shaken. Creatures whose HD exceed your character level are not affected. Bloody murder is a mind-affecting fear ability.

PLAYING AN AVENGING EXECUTIONER

You are a warrior of dark passions and an agent of your own brand of justice. Your path is not one of wanton bloodletting, but a search for righteousness where none exists, a measure of punishment no court would dare impose, and a way to finally silence screams that long have gone unanswered. By your blade you are judge and executioner in a world where innocence is yours alone to decide and forgiveness is weakness. And for your prey there can never be restitution.

As an avenging executioner, you are driven by a thirst for revenge, whether against a person, a group, or even a whole race. You seek to share your fear and suffering with those you perceive as responsible. You are often alone in your quest—few understand your obsession. Occasionally you find others as impassioned as you and together strive for vengeance against a common enemy, but such kindred spirits are rare.

Your past is gone, and many fear you. You operate on the fringes of society. In darkened alleys, dank sewers, and lonely moors, you build your reputation and grow in strength.

SKIRMISH AND SUDDEN STRIKE

Many of the prestige class examples presented in this chapter, as well as new feats presented in Chapter 3, refer to the ninja and scout from the *Complete Adventurer* supplement. Each of those classes has a signature special attack (sudden strike and skirmish, respectively). For ease of reference, these class features are summarized here.

SUDDEN STRIKE (EX)

If a ninja can catch an opponent when it is unable to defend itself effectively from her attack, she can strike a vital spot for extra damage. Whenever a ninja's target is denied a Dexterity bonus to Armor Class (whether the target actually has a Dexterity bonus or not), the ninja deals an extra 1d6 points of damage with her attack. This extra damage increases by 1d6 points for every two ninja levels after 1st (to a maximum of 10d6 at 19th level). A ninja can't use sudden strike when flanking an opponent unless that opponent is denied its Dexterity bonus to AC.

This damage also applies to ranged attacks against targets up to 30 feet away. Creatures with concealment, creatures without discernible anatomies, and creatures immune to extra damage from critical hits are all immune to sudden strikes. A ninja can't make a sudden strike while attacking the limbs of a creature whose vitals are out of reach.

A ninja can't use sudden strike to deliver nonlethal damage. Weapons capable of dealing only nonlethal damage don't deal extra damage when used as part of a sudden strike.

The extra damage from the sudden strike ability stacks with the extra damage from sneak attack whenever both would apply to the same target. For the purpose of qualifying for feats, prestige classes, and similar options that require a minimum number of extra damage dice, treat the ninja's sudden strike ability as the equivalent of sneak attack.

SKIRMISH (EX)

A scout relies on mobility to deal extra damage and improve her defense. She deals an extra 1d6 points of damage on all attacks she makes during any round in which she moves at least 10 feet. The extra damage applies only to attacks taken during the scout's turn. This extra damage increases by 1d6 for every four levels gained above 1st (2d6 at 5th, 3d6 at 9th, 4d6 at 13th, and 5d6 at 17th level).

The extra damage applies only against living creatures that have a discernible anatomy. Undead, constructs, oozes, plants, incorporeal creatures, and creatures immune to extra damage from critical hits are not vulnerable to this additional damage. The scout must be able to see the target well enough to pick out a vital spot and must be able to reach such a spot. Scouts can apply this extra damage to ranged attacks made while skirmishing, but only if the target is within 30 feet.

At 3rd level, a scout gains a +1 competence bonus to Armor Class during any round in which she moves at least 10 feet. The bonus applies as soon as the scout has moved 10 feet and lasts until the start of her next turn. This bonus improves by 1 for every four levels gained above 3rd (+2 at 7th, +3 at 11th, +4 at 15th, and +5 at 19th level).

A scout loses this ability when wearing medium or heavy armor or when carrying a medium or heavy load. If she gains the skirmish ability from another class, the bonuses stack.

Combat

The aspects of fear—surprise, intimidation, and hopelessness—are vital weapons in your arsenal. Given the opportunity, you should always attack unexpectedly to cripple your prey with terror. Those who stand their ground must face your blade and the dread you wield along with it. Retreat and strike again from hiding against more powerful opponents or those unaffected by fear. When your prey flees, hunt it down and ambush it repeatedly, inspiring ever greater dread and panic with which to slowly tear it apart.

Advancement

Tragedy led you to your current life. The loss of a friend to a savage raid, betrayal by a church that promised sanctuary, abandonment by friends who swore their support—any such great wrong might have caused you to break from those you once trusted. Your hunger for revenge is insatiable. You are constantly on the move, pursuing quarry gone to ground or members of the group that wronged you, or striving to wipe out every last one of a hated people.

Stealth and intimidation are your favored tools, so improving related skills is key to both your hunt and your survival. Choose feats such as Combat Reflexes and Mobility, or movement skill tricks such as Twisted Charge or Dismount Attack, that allow you to get past obstacles to reach even the best-guarded target.

Resources

Most of what you have you took, whether out of necessity or as possessions "reclaimed" from defeated prey. The laws of the world no longer serve you, so you take what you see as yours by right. You don't seek to harm innocents, but the ignorant and complacent cannot be allowed to impede your mighty work.

AVENGING EXECUTIONERS IN THE WORLD

"If she didn't wake up screaming, she wouldn't wake up at all."
—Lieutenant Nanci Tomason,
discussing an avenging executioner

Avenging executioners fall into a gray (perhaps dark gray) area between heroes and villains. One might slaughter priests of St. Cuthbert because he believes the deity forsook him at a vital moment, while another remorselessly hunts yuan-ti to exact vengeance from the creatures who slaughtered his children. The former could be a fearsome enemy, but the latter might share the same goals as the party and be a formidable ally—at least until he has taken his revenge.

Organization

The life of an avenging executioner is often lonely. His single-minded determination sets him on a path few can follow, and he distances himself from those he might care for, realizing that any who share his life also risk sharing his death. Having lost so much, an avenging executioner grows accustomed to the bitter freedom of an outcast.

Loneliness is not the way of all avenging executioners, however. Those who did not face their tragedies alone take up arms with their fellow victims. The survivors of a tribe wiped out by gnolls or of a mercenary party betrayed by its cold-hearted employer might band together for retribution. The most intelligent and cool-headed avenging executioners master their hatred and control their thirst for justice. These individuals see the need for and benefits of companionship just as others do, although they have a more calculating perspective that takes into account who might aid them in their bloody work. Such a mastermind might create an entire organization, turning a thieves' guild into an army of assassins, a band of barbarians into a berserker horde, or an adventuring company into a lethal strike force.

NPC Reactions

Fear not only empowers an avenging executioner, but also shackles him like a chain. Reports of murders move swiftly through an area as the corpses pile up. Avenging executioners earn frightening appellations, such as Jack-in-Irons, the Lantern Man, or the Swan Street Slicer, inspired by their methods or hunting grounds. As the body count increases, so do the rumors grow from murmured warnings to fearsome legends. Few stop to consider whether an avenging executioner might have an agenda beyond wanton slaughter. Fear is never rational, and terrorized bystanders are quick to imagine themselves in the place of the hunted, even if the killer's victims are related in a way that does not apply to them (such as belonging to a powerful thieves' guild).

However, exceptions do exist. Those wronged who cannot or will not take matters into their own hands might adopt an avenging executioner as their personal champion. Some in power see avenging executioners as useful vigilantes and might step outside the bounds of their offices to support—or, far less ethically, create—such desperate hunters.

AVENGING EXECUTIONER LORE

Characters with ranks in Knowledge (local) can research avenging executioners to learn more about them. When a character succeeds on a skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 10: Avenging executioners are serial killers who haunt the alleys and lonely places beneath the surface of society.

DC 15: Avenging executioners make deft use of fear to incapacitate and control those they hunt. They are remorseless and single-minded in their pursuit of prey.

DC 20: While often unhinged, avenging executioners are not random murderers. A great wrong or tragedy leads them to hunt down those they hold responsible. Only those

who guard an avenging executioner's prey or who hinder his pursuit need fear his blade.

DC 30: Characters who achieve this level of success can learn important details about specific avenging executioners in your campaign, including notable individuals currently operating in specific areas, possible reasons for their actions, and theories about their targets.

Avenging executioners are notoriously difficult to find. Some set up trophy-laden hideouts, while others range abroad to track down their prey and might be encountered nearly anywhere. The most likely way to encounter an avenging executioner is to determine the location of his next target and wait there. Even then, attempting conversation might have to wait until after he completes his grisly work, lest the PCs become mere obstacles to be dealt with.

AVENGING EXECUTIONERS IN THE GAME

Whether an avenging executioner becomes your campaign's next villain or a somber addition to the party depends on the targets of his hatred. If the prime antagonist is a nation of cannibal gnolls, a cult of the devil lord Levistus, or a similar evil entity, an avenging executioner could be a PC traumatized by such a group. This driven loner is little different from most druids, rangers, warlocks, or other characters who commonly operate outside society. Thus, integrating a heroic avenging executioner requires only that both he and the party fight the same enemy.

As an antagonist, an avenging executioner can be an ongoing dark legend. His career begins with a single murder, then another, and another, each with the same hallmarks. Perhaps a witness gets a glimpse of the killer. Such a chain of events should interest PCs in the slayings, leading them to learn what connected the victims and figure out who might be next. Their investigations lead them to confront the avenging executioner, either to end the killings or, depending on the nature of his targets, aid in his fearsome hunt.

Adaptation

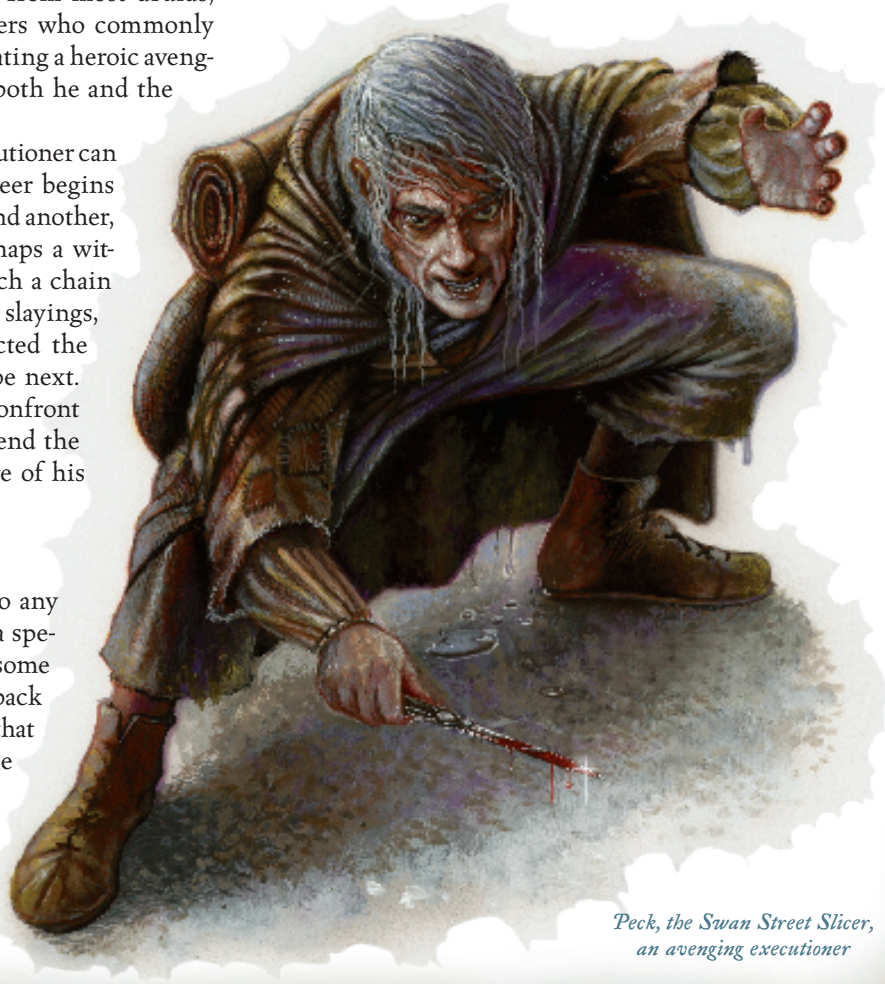
An avenging executioner can fit into any campaign setting. In worlds where a specific nation or race faces prejudice, some members of that people might fight back as avenging executioners. Campaigns that take place far from the intrigues of the city might see avenging executioners as dark woodland hunters, radical allies of druids and rangers and punishers of those who despoil nature. Another option might have avenging executioners of terrible ability but dull wit adopted by a government or church as secret police, deadly hounds set loose upon the group's enemies.

Sample Encounter

An avenging executioner presents PCs with a moral quandary. Having been terribly wronged, he can be a sympathetic figure, one whose cause is righteous even if his methods are distasteful. Lawful PCs might be forced to ask themselves how just a society can be that allows obvious injustices to occur.

EL 10: A homeless mute, Peck (as his masters called him) was discovered as a child huddled on the doorstep of a noble household on posh Swan Street. He was taken in by the family but did not find comfort or generosity there; rather, he was pressed into domestic service with only a dog's cage for a room. Little more than a slave to the old, sybaritic, and abusive family, the halfling faced demeaning chores and daily physical and verbal abuses. Eighteen years of constant exploitation left Peck deathly ill, and his cruel-hearted masters merely pitched him out of their manor like so much refuse.

Against all odds, though, Peck endured and recovered. Finally free after a lifetime of indignities, the mute halfling took up a blade and headed back toward Swan Street. Now



Peck, the Swan Street Slicer, an avenging executioner

Illus. by E. Cox

he takes revenge on the city's fiscally rich but morally bankrupt, starting with those who had used him for so many years.

Peck, The Swan Street Slicer **CR 10**

Male halfling rogue 7/avenging executioner 3
CN Small humanoid
Init +4; **Senses** Listen +11, Spot +13
Languages Common, Halfling (cannot speak)

AC 21, touch 15, flat-footed 21; Dodge, Mobility, uncanny dodge
(+1 size, +4 Dex, +5 armor, +1 natural)
hp 61 (10 HD)
Resist evasion
Fort +6, **Ref** +13, **Will** +7 (+9 against fear)

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee *+1 short sword* +13/+8 (1d4/19–20 plus poison)
Ranged tanglefoot bag +13 touch (special)
Base Atk +7; **Grp** +2
Atk Options bloody blade, poison (giant wasp poison, Fort DC 14, 1d6 Dex/1d6 Dex), sneak attack +4d6, sudden strike +2d6
Special Actions rapid intimidation
Combat Gear 5 doses of giant wasp poison, 2 tanglefoot bags

Abilities Str 8, Dex 19, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 13
SQ trap sense +2, trapfinding
Feats Dodge, Mobility, Stealthy, Weapon Finesse
Skills Balance +9, Climb +1, Disguise +3, Escape Artist +7, Gather Information +3, Hide +21, Intimidate +13, Jump +4, Knowledge (local) +4, Listen +11, Move Silently +20, Open Lock +9, Spot +13, Tumble +, Use Rope +7
Possessions combat gear plus *+2 studded leather armor*, *+1 short sword*, *amulet of natural armor +1*, *boots of elvenkind*, *2 potions of darkvision*, *2 potions of invisibility*, *rope of climbing*, masterwork thieves' tools

Bloody Blade (Ex) Whenever Peck deals sudden strike damage, opponents with 10 or fewer HD within 30 feet are shaken for 3 rounds; Will DC 14 negates.

BATTLE TRICKSTER

"Oh, I'm terribly sorry. Is that my blade in your gut?"
—Elibor Gunter, battle trickster

The battle trickster engages in combat not only to defeat enemies but to impress them with martial and acrobatic prowess. He amazes onlookers with daring and death-defying stunts, making a spectacle of war.

Table 2–3: The Battle Trickster Hit Die: d10

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+2	+0	+0	Bonus trick
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+0	Bonus feat
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+1	Bonus trick, tricky fighting

Class Skills (4 + Int modifier per level): Balance, Bluff, Climb, Craft, Handle Animal, Jump, Profession, Ride, Swim, Tumble, Use Rope.

BECOMING A BATTLE TRICKSTER

Swashbucklers make up the majority of battle tricksters, since their abilities already so closely mimic those of the prestige class. Most of the rest are rangers, along with the occasional fighter whose high Intelligence provides extra skill points. Bards or rogues sometimes pick up a few levels of battle trickster, though such characters prefer the uncanny trickster prestige class (page 67).

Entry Requirements

Base Attack Bonus: +5.
Skills: Any three skills 6 ranks each.
Skill Tricks: Any two.

CLASS FEATURES

The battle trickster excels at combining skill tricks with normal combat.

Bonus Trick: At 1st level, and again at 3rd level, you gain a bonus skill trick for which you meet the prerequisite. These bonus tricks do not cost skill points and do not count against your maximum number of skill tricks available.

Bonus Feat: At 2nd level, you gain a bonus feat for which you meet the prerequisite. This feat must be selected from the list of fighter bonus feats.

Tricky Fighting (Ex): At 3rd level, you have mastered incorporating skill tricks into your combat routines. In any round when you perform a skill trick, you gain a +1 competence bonus on the next attack roll you make that round.

PLAYING A BATTLE TRICKSTER

Whereas magical tricksters (page 45) and uncanny tricksters (page 67) can be show-offs, you never use your tricks to get attention, no matter how flashy they are. You might not be quiet about your abilities, but you don't flaunt them. When combat begins, they speak for themselves.

You work well with both combat specialists and other kinds of tricksters. Becoming a skill trick expert instantly affiliates you with a very loose fellowship of tricksters (magical, uncanny, and battle). You don't get along with every trickster you meet, though: Some jealously guard their secrets and view others of their kind as rivals.

Combat

Whereas other tricksters might flit about the battlefield, looking for just the right opportunity to perform a spectacular combat-ending strike, you stand near the front lines. Your fighting experience, solid hit points, and repertoire of feats and skill tricks offer you the flexibility to serve as a front-line battler or in a supporting role. You don't see your tricks as ways to impress onlookers or intimidate foes, but rather as additional weapons in your arsenal.

Advancement

You don't become a battle trickster in a vacuum. You probably had a mentor at some point, someone who sensed

your boredom with traditional fighting techniques. Or you might be self-taught, watching other unconventional combatants and endlessly repeating the movements you saw. Once you learned the basics, you decided to move on to more advanced battle techniques.

Through self-sacrifice and hard work, you managed to learn enough basic skill tricks that picking up more has become easy. You know some skills, perhaps a wider array than most who pursue your profession, but you are not necessarily a master of any one of them.

Just as you spent so much time learning basic skill tricks, you must continue to practice the more advanced techniques. Fortunately, this prestige class offers strong support in skill points and access to bonus tricks. Your feat selection should support your skill tricks as well as your preferred mode of combat. If you focus on movement tricks, choose feats that allow you to move faster or traverse difficult obstacles more easily; if you rely on Combat Expertise to thwart attackers, you'll get more punch by focusing on that feat tree.

Elibor Gunter, a battle trickster

Resources

Although you might not have realized it when you became a battle trickster, you are part of a larger (albeit very loosely organized) group. The benefits and requirements of this group are few, but it does offer the camaraderie of shared experiences as well as the chance to learn new tricks. Nevertheless, tricksters owe no more to one another than do any other people with similar, nonbinding interests.

BATTLE TRICKSTERS IN THE WORLD

"He came at me from out of nowhere. One moment he's not there, and the next he is. I don't know what he did to me, but it hurt."

—Theta Sunglory, survivor

The battle trickster makes an excellent irregular soldier operating in a small group of specialists, such as an adventuring party. Whether scrumming toe to toe in the front line or engaging a distant foe, the battle trickster holds his own in any combat situation. He usually continues to specialize in whatever role he held before joining the prestige class, albeit with unusual techniques.

Illus. by W. Maby

BUYER BEWARE

My Good Lord Siekes:

Your lordship, I hope this missive finds you, the illustrious lady Siekes, your noble heirs, your impressive holdings in Saerb, and your vast portfolio well and more than well. With your indulgence, as your dutifully attentive and personally appointed agent to your southern claims, I have news of interest to report.

I'll not trouble your valuable time with the specifics of my journey: the crass caravaneers, the fetid foods, the ramshackle flyspeck villages, the sanctimonious droning of my fellow passenger (a would-be devotee of the Saint), nor the dark-eyed things that scampered and leaped in the shadows of the surrounding woodlands, their sharp faces full of quiet menace whenever they appeared. Worry not; we Shimbleses are no complainers.

My news in fact is most exciting: I have already opened dealings to acquire for you a lucrative holding, from a most unlikely source. A local halfling I've recently ingratiated myself with turns out to be the owner of one Felfeather Bridge, a lengthy span crossing a swift river, and the only viable crossing from here to all points west. For a reasonable sum (the entire allowance you've afforded me, plus a bit more), I've made a deposit toward purchasing this bottleneck on all trade in the region.

My new compatriot did ask me to relay a strange bit of "advice" to you, though—as if such a scallywag had any means to instruct upon my lordship. His words were: "Rooks don't live in Saerb alone." The yokel's turn toward ornithological interests baffled me, and I've seen no crows in the area of your soon-to-be-purchased bridge, but as a competent and attentive servant I'm bound to report this detail.

That brings a merry close to my report, your lordship. If, with all wisdom and haste, you might send an additional 270,673 gold crowns, I will see to the final acquisition of your new holdings here.

Your perspicacious servant,

Bysryn Shimbles

Organization

Battle tricksters congregate only on an occasional basis, usually along with magical tricksters and uncanny tricksters (although they make up the smallest number in such a mixed group). They swap techniques, introduce newly developed tricks and trick-supporting equipment and magic, and share experiences. Outside observers might assume such a meeting is part of a circus or carnival, with tricksters springing about performing for the enjoyment and education of onlookers.

These gatherings, though enjoyable, do not represent a structured organization. Battle tricksters looking to become part of something more permanent usually join groups that appreciate both their abilities and their moral choices: police forces, thieves' guilds, and military or guard units.

NPC Reactions

Battle tricksters are impressive and terrifying in combat. People who have witnessed them in action treat them with respect, even awe. Most strangers have a friendly attitude, or at least a false warmth brought on by intimidation (whether intended or not). Some are jealous of battle tricksters and their abilities, or covet such prowess for themselves. They treat battle tricksters with calculated indifference, and the most petty of such people are unfriendly.

Because tricksters run the entire gamut of morality, some use their abilities to take advantage of less talented folk. A victim of such exploitation has a negative view of all tricksters and is unfriendly at best.

BATTLE TRICKSTER LORE

Characters with ranks in Knowledge (history) or Knowledge (local) can research battle tricksters to learn more about them. When a character succeeds on a skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 10: Battle tricksters employ unusual talents in combat.

DC 15: Battle tricksters don't stop practicing other abilities just because they start to learn tricks.

DC 20: Not every battle trickster is a swashbuckling acrobat—some of them are also raging barbarians or righteous paladins. They use skill tricks to enhance their existing talents.

DC 30: Characters who achieve this level of success can learn important details about specific battle tricksters in your campaign, including a notable individual, the area in which he operates, and the kinds of activities he undertakes.

Because battle tricksters operate in small groups of mixed abilities or in connection with military units, the easiest way to find one is to contact the local garrison or sheriff and inquire about individuals with unique fighting talents.

BATTLE TRICKSTERS IN THE GAME

Battle tricksters are frighteningly effective opponents with a few surprises in store. A single one in a group of standard combatants makes an excellent leader. The majority of battle tricksters are not villains, but they can be entertaining bodyguards for the party's antagonist.

Anyone who enjoys playing swashbucklers and similar characters who perform over-the-top, cinematic acts of daring should find the battle trickster an interesting PC choice. The prestige class does not hamper a fighting class's abilities, so even someone who prefers the role of front-line combatant might enjoy the slight change of pace and increased flexibility offered by the prestige class.

Adaptation

The battle trickster is already a very generalized prestige class that can easily fit into any campaign setting. It does rely on the new rules for skill tricks, however, so it is not suitable for a campaign that does not incorporate them. Replacing bonus tricks with extra feats from the fighter list can repurpose the character as a combat specialist with a more generalized approach to skills.

Sample Encounter

Battle tricksters are always looking for ways to do what they do best. If there's a fight nearby, a battle trickster moves toward it as fast as he can.

EL 15: The PCs might run across Elibor Gunter just before, during, or just after a combat in which he faces numerous opponents. He takes any opportunity to pick a fight, whether it be a bar brawl, a back-alley rumble, or a challenge to loitering thugs. The more opponents, the better—he plunges into their midst, mad with battle lust, whirling his spiked chain to disarm anyone within reach. Depending on the situation, the PCs might befriend Elibor by helping him against overwhelming odds, or they might make him into a terrible foe by trying to keep him out of a fight.

ELIBOR GUNTER **CR 15**

Male dwarf fighter 12/battle trickster 3
CN Medium humanoid
Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0
Languages Common, Dwarven, Terran, Undercommon

AC 22, touch 12, flat-footed 21; Dodge, Mobility, +4 AC against giants
(+1 Dex, +9 armor, +1 deflection, +1 natural)
hp 117 (15 HD)
Resist stability (+4 against bull rush and trip)
Fort +13 (+15 against poison), **Ref** +6, **Will** +5; +2 on saves against spells and spell-like effects

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); Spring Attack
Melee *+2 ghost touch spiked chain* +24/+19/+14 (2d4+13)
Base Atk +15; **Grp** +20
Atk Options Improved Disarm, Improved Trip, Quick Draw, Whirlwind Attack, +1 on attacks against orcs and goblinoids, skill tricks, tricky fighting

Abilities Str 20, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 6
SQ stonecunning (*PH* 15)

Feats Combat Expertise, Dodge[B], Exotic Weapon Proficiency (spiked chain), Freerunner*, Greater Weapon Focus (spiked chain)[B], Greater Weapon Specialization (spiked chain)[B], Improved Disarm, Improved Trip[B], Mobility, Quick Draw[B], Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (spiked chain), Weapon Specialization (spiked chain)[B], Whirlwind Attack[B]
*New feat described in Chapter 3

Skills Balance +6, Bluff +3, Climb +17, Diplomacy +0, Disguise –2 (+0 acting), Intimidate +8, Jump +14, Listen +0, Sleight of Hand +8, Spot +0, Tumble +6

Skill Tricks* Corner Perch, Extreme Leap[B], Hidden Blade, Leaping Climber, Never Outnumbered, Nimble Charge, Speedy Ascent[B], Spot the Weak Point, Twisted Charge[B], Up the Hill, Walk the Walls[B], Wall Jumper
*Described in Chapter 3

Possessions *+4 mithral breastplate, +2 ghost touch spiked chain, amulet of natural armor +1, ring of protection +1, gauntlets of ogre power*

CLOAKED DANCER

"Watch me. Watch my dance. Ignore my hands. Ignore your death."

—Mina Longacre, reciting the cloaked dancer's mantra

The cloaked dancer dances into the hearts and minds of her audience, beguiling those around her with boundless charm and careful dance moves, leaving her victims in a state of ecstasy even as she kills them.

BECOMING A CLOAKED DANCER

Bards most often and most easily become cloaked dancers, although a substantial number of rogues and some monks also enter the prestige class. Ninjas and spellthieves occasionally travel the path of the cloaked dancer, although they have difficulty qualifying unless they multiclass, usually with a few levels of bard.

Entry Requirements

Skills: Hide 5 ranks, Perform (dance) 10 ranks, Sleight of Hand 5 ranks.

CLASS FEATURES

The cloaked dancer distracts and fascinates her enemies, allowing her to strike unexpectedly . . . and with deadly effect.

Spellcasting: At each even-numbered level, you gain new spells per day and an increase in caster level (and spells known, if applicable) as if you had also gained a level in an arcane spellcasting class to which you belonged before adding the prestige class level. You do not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained. If you had more than one arcane spellcasting class before becoming a cloaked dancer, you must decide to which class to add each level for the purpose of determining spells per day, caster level, and spells known.

Enchanting Dance (Su): Once per day per cloaked dancer level, you can use your dance to produce supernatural effects on those who observe you. Each ability requires both a minimum cloaked dancer level and a minimum number of ranks in the Perform (dance) skill to qualify; if you do not have the required number of ranks, you do not gain the enchanting dance ability until you acquire them. This ability can be used only if you are wearing light armor or no armor and carrying no more than a light load. Enchanting dance is an enchantment (compulsion), mind-affecting ability.

Starting an enchanting dance effect is a standard action. You must concentrate each round to maintain the dance; no dance can be maintained for more rounds than your cloaked dancer level + your Con modifier (minimum 1 round).

The save DC for your enchanting dance effects is 10 + your cloaked dancer level + your Cha modifier. A creature can't be affected again by your enchanting dance effect for 24 hours whether or not it succeeds on the saving throw.

Beguiling Dance: A cloaked dancer with 10 or more ranks in Perform (dance) can use her enchanting dance to distract her enemies. Whenever you start or maintain a beguiling dance, all enemies within 30 feet who can see you must succeed on a Will save or be dazed for 1 round. Creatures that fail this save also have their attitude improved by one step for as long as you maintain the dance (see Influencing NPC Attitudes, *PH* 74). This attitude adjustment does not prevent any subsequent attitude changes. For example, an enemy that becomes indifferent toward you as a result of this effect still turns hostile if you then attack it.

Wearying Dance: A 3rd-level cloaked dancer with 12 or more ranks in Perform (dance) can use her enchanting dance to tire her enemies. Whenever you start or maintain

Table 2–4: The Cloaked Dancer Hit Die: d6

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spellcasting
1st	+0	+0	+2	+0	Enchanting dance (beguiling dance)	—
2nd	+1	+0	+3	+0	Surprise strike +1d6	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
3rd	+2	+1	+3	+1	Enchanting dance (wearying dance)	—
4th	+3	+1	+4	+1	Surprise strike +2d6	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
5th	+3	+1	+4	+1	Enchanting dance (frightful dance)	—

Class Skills (6 + Int modifier per level): Appraise, Balance, Bluff, Climb, Concentration, Craft, Diplomacy, Disguise, Escape Artist, Gather Information, Jump, Perform, Profession, Sense Motive, Sleight of Hand, Speak Language, Swim, Tumble, Use Magic Device, Use Rope.

a wearying dance, all enemies within 30 feet who can see you must succeed on a Will save or be fatigued for as long as you maintain the dance. Creatures failing this save that are already fatigued become exhausted.

Frightful Dance: A 5th-level cloaked dancer with 14 or more ranks in Perform (dance) can use her enchanting dance to scare her enemies. Whenever you start or maintain a frightful dance, all enemies within 30 feet who can see you must succeed on a Will save or be shaken for as long as you maintain the dance. Creatures failing this save that are already shaken become frightened, and those that are already frightened become panicked.

Surprise Strike (Ex): Beginning at 2nd level, you can make a particularly effective attack against creatures distracted by your dance. As a full-round action, you can maintain your enchanting dance and make a melee attack with a light weapon, dealing an extra 1d6 points of damage. At 4th level, the extra damage you deal increases to 2d6.

The extra damage from the surprise strike ability stacks with the extra damage from sneak attack whenever both would apply to the same target.

A target under the effect of your enchanting dance is considered flat-footed against the attack. Any creature that is not vulnerable to extra damage from sneak attacks is immune to this effect.

This ability counts as sudden strike for the purpose of meeting prerequisites or using ambush feats (page 71).

Illus. by E. Widermann

Mina Longacre, a cloaked dancer

PLAYING A CLOAKED DANCER

You are the center of attention, the person everyone wants to talk to, the "face" of the party. Even if you aren't the most attractive or charismatic member of your group, your unequaled skill at dance creates an irresistible appeal born of justified confidence and supernatural influence. You are more than just an eye-catching butterfly, though. Your mark rarely survives the encounter if you don't want him to.

Combat

You have two roles in combat: distracter and killer. When your group's plan calls for a diversion, you shine. You draw the attention of opponents, allowing your allies to position themselves for their most devastating attacks. You can perform this role near the front lines of battle, but you have a better chance of survival if you stay near the back. As the killer you move in close, drawing the enemy's eye, and deliver one debilitating or deadly blow that turns the tide of battle.

None of your enchanting dance effects can influence creatures immune to enchantments or mind-affecting abilities, so against those foes you'll need to fall back on the abilities of your other class or classes.

Advancement

An exquisite physical specimen, you drew the attention of patrons and audiences as often with your unquestionable attractiveness as with your extraordinary artistic talents. Perhaps you sought to give your art a more practical use, or perhaps you grew disgusted with the unhidden lust of those who watched you, but eventually you brought together your love of dance with your martial abilities.

Since the first killing from your enchanting dance—by your own hand or that of a partner—you have grown steadily in both fame and notoriety. You are beloved for your talents but feared for the death that follows you. You must walk a fine line, never letting the dread of the latter outweigh the appeal of the former.

Obviously, you must continue to max out your ranks in Perform (dance), but don't forget other useful skills such as Bluff, Hide, and Diplomacy. The new ambush feats in Chapter 3 present additional options for your surprising strike ability, particularly if you already have sneak attack or sudden strike from another class. Weapon Finesse and Weapon Focus greatly enhance a mission's chance of success. Interaction skill tricks are an excellent choice as well.

Resources

You rarely work alone, yet your involvement with an organization is transitory at best. As your needs or whims dictate you flit from town to town, dance troupe to dance troupe, and are sought out by thieves and assassins' guilds. For the short time you join such groups, you can rely on whatever resources they provide. Most of the time, however, you are on your own.

CLOAKED DANCERS IN THE WORLD

"She was a rare beauty: charming, graceful, talented. It's too bad she killed the king."

—Tessa Senchan, spellwarp sniper and royal guard officer

In any setting that includes assassins and bards, cloaked dancers slip comfortably into the space between the two. They can act as alternative assassins or as especially influential bards who focus on their love of dance.

Organization

Cloaked dancers typically work with trusted partners or small groups, making them well suited to adventuring parties. In rare circumstances they work alone, but such cloaked dancers often have short careers. On entering a new town or city, a cloaked dancer who expects to stay for more than a few days usually joins a dance troupe or thieves' guild (or both). These alliances are rarely permanent, lasting just long enough to benefit both parties. A cloaked dancer who travels regularly between a small number of cities might have membership in several organizations but no loyalty to any of them.

NPC Reactions

Reactions to a known cloaked dancer vary widely. The nobility both prize and fear cloaked dancers, welcoming them cautiously, since having one perform brings much prestige but also the risk of death. Bodyguards and law enforcers despise them for the murders that inevitably follow their performances. Common folk strain to catch glimpses of cloaked dancers, treating them with the awe and jealousy that accompany celebrity.

CLOAKED DANCER LORE

Characters with ranks in Knowledge (nobility and royalty) or Perform (dance) can research cloaked dancers to learn more about them. When a character succeeds on a skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 10: A cloaked dancer can charm watchers with her dance.

DC 15: A cloaked dancer creates an effective diversion while her comrades rob or murder with ease.

DC 20: A cloaked dancer can slide a dagger between your ribs and still leave you happy.

DC 30: Characters who achieve this level of success can learn important details about specific cloaked dancers in your campaign, including a notable individual, the area in which she operates, and the kinds of performances in which she specializes.

Finding a cloaked dancer is rarely difficult if the PCs have a connection to the criminal underworld. A thieves' guild can usually set up a meeting. If the PCs know of a specific cloaked dancer, they can also inquire of a dance troupe operating in that city.

CLOAKED DANCERS IN THE GAME

A cloaked dancer can be attractive to the player who enjoys the role of a specialized killer but does not want to play an evil character. For players who are interested more in social interaction than in assassination, the prestige class ensures that they are the center of attention in any encounter involving intrigue and diplomacy.

Introducing cloaked dancers into your campaign should not be difficult. Famous dancers might already exist, perhaps as part of a traveling show or as members of an exclusive school of dance—their extra talents can be revealed at an opportune time.

Adaptation

Cloaked dancers are most appropriate for campaigns that focus on urban adventures and social encounters. In campaigns involving large combats, exploration, or dungeon delving, they are as out of place as songbirds on the battlefield. Against intelligent humanoid enemies they can hold their own in any campaign, though, with abilities resembling those of enchanters and bards. If your campaign's main antagonists are creatures immune to enchantments or mind-affecting abilities, such as undead, you might need to adjust the enchanting dance to affect such beings. Consider changing the entry requirements to include ranks in the Knowledge skill appropriate to that type of creature.

Sample Encounter

The PCs might meet a cloaked dancer at a social function, whether they are guests or guards. In either case, they might become involved if one spots the cloaked dancer's weapon or realizes that she has allies in the crowd. Their attempt to thwart her can earn them the thanks of one group and the hatred of another.

EL 10: Flighty and driven by whims, Mina Longacre is every bit the diva of her reputation. The PCs encounter Mina during one of her deadly performances, or in the frantic minutes after she concludes a dance and makes to flee. Depending on how they feel about her intended target, the PCs might attempt to stop her or simply watch.

MINA LONGACRE **CR 10**

Female human bard 7/cloaked dancer 3
CN Medium humanoid
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0
Languages Common, Elven, Halfling

AC 13, touch 12, flat-footed 12; Dodge, Mobility (+1 Dex, +1 armor, +1 deflection)
hp 48 (10 HD)
Fort +4, **Ref** +9, **Will** +6

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee *+1 human bane dagger* +7/+2 (1d4/19–20) or +9/+4 (1d4+2/19–20) against humans
Ranged *+1 human bane dagger* +9 (1d4/19–20) or +11 (1d4+2/19–20) against humans
Base Atk +7; **Grp** +6
Atk Options skill tricks, surprising strike +1d6

Special Actions bardic music 7/day (inspire courage +1, *fascinate* 3 targets, countersong, *suggestion*), enchanting dance 3/day (beguiling dance, wearying dance; DC 17)
Combat Gear *panic button* (escaping)*, 2 *potions of cure light wounds*
*New item described in Chapter 5
Bard Spells Known (CL 8th):
3rd (2/day)—*dispel magic, slow* (DC 17), *create fetch**
2nd (4/day)—*alter self, detect thoughts* (DC 16), *enthrall* (DC 16), *invisibility*
1st (4/day)—*charm person* (DC 15), *cure light wounds, lesser confusion* (DC 15), *sleep* (DC 15)
0 (3/day)—*detect magic, light, mage hand, mending, open/close, prestidigitation*
*New spell described in Chapter 4

Abilities Str 8, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 19
SQ bardic knowledge +9
Feats Chord of Distraction*, Dodge, Mobility, Quick Draw, Skill Focus (Perform [dance])
*New feat described in Chapter 3
Skills Balance +3, Bluff +17, Concentration +10, Diplomacy +19, Disguise +4 (+6 acting), Gather Information +9, Hide +6, Intimidate +6, Jump +1, Knowledge (local) +14, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +14, Listen +0, Perform (dance) +20, Sleight of Hand +16, Spot +0, Tumble +14, Use Rope +3
Skill Tricks* Hidden Blade, Shrouded Dance, Social Recovery, Timely Misdirection
*Described in Chapter 3
Possessions combat gear plus *+1 human bane dagger, bracers of armor +1, cloak of Charisma +2, ring of protection +1*

COMBAT TRAPSMITH

"Go on ahead. I've got a surprise for those guys."
—Alexan, combat trapsmith

Combat trapsmiths can litter a battlefield or dungeon with devices of their own cunning design. They can put together a variety of traps, ranging from annoying to deadly, in mere seconds. With a bit of preparation, a combat trapsmith can turn a difficult battle into an easy exercise or vice versa.

BECOMING A COMBAT TRAPSMITH

Rogues and scouts make up the majority of combat trapsmiths, with ninjas and multiclass rangers forming the bulk of the rest. These four classes rely most often on traps and (except for the ranger) are also the best able to find and disarm them.

Entry Requirements

Skills: Craft (trapmaking) 8 ranks, Disable Device 6 ranks, Search 6 ranks.
Special: Trapfinding.

CLASS FEATURES

The combat trapsmith takes trapmaking to new heights, rapidly installing temporary devices for use on the battlefield.

Table 2–5: The Combat Trapsmith Hit Die: d6

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Combat Traps Known
1st	+0	+2	+2	+0	Combat trapping, trap sense +1	2
2nd	+1	+3	+3	+0	Skill Focus (Craft [trapmaking])	3
3rd	+2	+3	+3	+1	Trap sense +2	4
4th	+3	+4	+4	+1	Improvised materials	5
5th	+3	+4	+4	+1	Expert trapsetter, trap sense +3	6

Class Skills (6 + Int modifier per level): Appraise, Balance, Climb, Concentration, Craft, Disable Device, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Knowledge (architecture and engineering), Listen, Move Silently, Open Lock, Profession, Search, Spot, Tumble, Use Rope.

Combat Trapping (Ex): You know how to create combat traps to aid your allies. At 1st level, you can learn two traps from the list in Table 2–6: Combat Traps, provided you meet the prerequisites. At each level thereafter, you add one additional trap to your repertoire, to a maximum of six traps known. Whenever you attain a new level in this class, you can choose to replace any one previously learned trap with a new trap.

A combat trap is triggered by any Tiny or larger creature entering the trapped square. Flying or incorporeal creatures don't trigger combat traps. You can build a combat trap only on solid ground—you can't place it on a wall or ceiling, in the air, or floating in the water. A combat trap functions only once. Once set, it lasts for 1 hour or until triggered, whichever comes first.

Crafting a combat trap requires a full-round action (which provokes attacks of opportunity) and a Craft (trapmaking) check. Each trap's entry lists the required Craft check DC. If the check is successful, you can place the trap in any square adjacent to your space. A failed check means that the action and materials are wasted to no effect, but you can try to set the same trap again later.

Some combat traps allow a saving throw, as noted in a trap's entry. The save DC is 10 + your combat trapsmith level + your Int modifier. Locating or disabling a combat trap requires a successful Search or Disable Device check with a DC equal to 20 + your combat trapsmith level + your Int modifier. You can automatically find and disable your own combat traps. Because a combat trap is built quickly and crudely, it is also possible to discern with a successful Spot check (using the same DC as given above), whether or not the observer has the trapfinding class feature. All combat traps produce extraordinary effects, so *dispel magic* or spell resistance cannot interfere with them.

Unless otherwise noted, an ongoing effect from a combat trap lasts for a number of rounds equal to your combat trapsmith level. Multiple effects from the same kind of combat trap don't stack; use only the longer duration.

Creating combat traps requires a special kit containing raw materials and tools. A combat trapsmith's kit costs 100 gp, weighs 10 pounds, and provides components sufficient to create ten traps. A combat trap can't be cannibalized for raw materials, nor can its materials be retrieved if the trap isn't triggered.

Trap Sense (Ex): Beginning at 1st level, you become more adept at evading the effects of traps. See the barbarian class feature, *PH* 26. If you already have trap sense, this class feature provides no additional benefit.

Skill Focus: At 2nd level, you gain Skill Focus (Craft [trapmaking]) as a bonus feat. If you already have this feat, you can instead select any other feat for which you meet the prerequisite.

Improvised Materials (Ex): Beginning at 4th level, you can craft combat traps from raw materials at hand instead of relying on your combat trapsmith's kit. Doing so increases the Craft (trapmaking) check DC by 5 but otherwise has no effect on the trap's potency.

Expert Trapsetter (Ex): At 5th level, you can set a combat trap as a standard action without provoking attacks of opportunity.

Combat Trap Descriptions

Entering the trapped square produces the stated effect.

Befuddler: A pungent spray applies a –2 penalty on Concentration checks, as well as ability checks and skill checks based on Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma (Will negates).

Enfeebler: A puff of acrid powder renders the target fatigued (Fortitude negates).

Entangler: A hidden cord loops around the target, holding it in place as a tanglefoot bag does. A successful Reflex save negates the effect; alternatively, a DC 20 Strength or Escape Artist check (made as a full-round action) allows the stuck creature to break free.

Equalizer: The first creature entering the trapped square must succeed on a Reflex save or fall prone. The trap reputedly gets its name from its gnome inventor, who used it to bring taller foes down to his level.

Flashbang: The trapped square emits a blinding burst of light accompanied by a loud thunderclap. Any creature in the trapped square or any adjacent square becomes blinded and deafened; a successful Fortitude save lessens the effect to dazzled.

Footspiker: This trap effectively fills the designated square with caltrops, potentially slowing the target's movement (*PH* 126).

Glitterburst: A fine cloud of silver dust clings to any creature within the trapped square (no save). Any creature affected by a glitterburst trap takes a –20 penalty on Hide checks and, if invisible, is visibly outlined for the duration of the effect.

Scorcher: The trapped square releases a cloud of fine dust followed by a spark, setting off a small explosion that deals 2d6 points of fire damage to each creature in that square (Reflex half).

Scorcher, Great: This works like a scorcher trap (see above), except that it deals 5d6 points of fire damage to each creature in the trapped square and in all adjacent squares (Reflex half).

Sleeper: A slumber-inducing vapor makes the target fall asleep. A successful Fortitude save lessens the effect to fatigued.

Spiderweb: The trapped square releases a burst of sticky tendrils that toughen when they contact air. This trap duplicates the effect of a *web* spell, except that the strands fill only the trapped square and all adjacent squares.

Stinkburst: A cloud of noxious vapors duplicates the effect of a *stinking cloud* spell, except that the effect fills only the trapped square. A successful Fortitude save negates the effect, but a creature must make a new saving throw each round it remains within the cloud.

Table 2–6: Combat Traps

Trap Name (Craft DC)	Prerequisites	Effect
Befuddler (15)	—	–2 penalty on Concentration, Int-, Wis-, Cha-based checks
Enfeebler (15)	Craft (alchemy) 1 rank	Fatigues target
Entangler (17)	Class level 2nd	Entangles target
Equalizer (17)	Class level 2nd	Target falls prone
Flashbang (19)	Craft (alchemy) 3 ranks, class level 3rd	Blinds and deafens target
Footspiker (15)	—	Halves target's speed
Glitterburst (15)	Craft (alchemy) 1 rank	Makes invisible target visible
Scorcher (15)	Craft (alchemy) 1 rank	Deals 2d6 fire damage
Scorcher, great (23)	Craft (alchemy) 5 ranks, class level 5th	Deals 5d6 fire damage in larger area
Sleeper (21)	Craft (alchemy) 4 ranks, class level 4th	Target falls asleep
Spiderweb (19)	Craft (alchemy) 3 ranks, class level 3rd	*Web* fills small area
Stinkburst (21)	Craft (alchemy) 4 ranks, class level 4th	*Stinking cloud* fills trapped square

PLAYING A COMBAT TRAPSMITH

From an early age you were fascinated by all aspects of traps, from their elegant engineering to their ingenious lethality. Perhaps you fell victim to a particularly innovative device, or witnessed the effectiveness of one. You might have had a teacher, but just as likely you learned from studying the mechanisms of sprung or disabled traps. You have dedicated yourself to the ultimate expression of the trapmaker's craft.

Preparation and care are the keys to your survival. You have great respect for traps and what they can do, so you never rush headlong into anyplace new and unfamiliar.

Your role in the party depends on its needs: You might take point, searching for the handiwork of other trapmakers, or follow up the rear, rigging nasty surprises to cover the group's withdrawal. In either case you take your responsibility, like everything else in life, very seriously.

Combat

You can hold your own in combat, thanks to the training you received before becoming a combat trapsmith, but you should stay out of melee as long as you can. Try not to draw attention to yourself while "enhancing" the battlefield with your special creations. Only after you've given yourself and your party the edge with your expert skills should you get involved in the fight.

Advancement

Even though you have reached a high degree of proficiency, you must continue to hone your craft. Max out your ranks in Craft (trapmaking), as well as in Disable Device and Search. If you have the skill points to spare, consider investing in Knowledge (architecture and engineering) or Knowledge (dungeoneering), if your journeys take you into appropriate environments. Choose feats that help you keep out of enemies' reach, or that let you move easily around the battlefield, such as Dodge (and related feats), Improved Initiative, and Dash (from *Complete Warrior*). Luck feats (page 72) are useful for those times when even your impressive skills fail you.

Taking a level in a spellcasting class (likely wizard, with your high Intelligence) can be a smart choice. Having even a few extra magical tricks up your sleeve gives you an edge against foes who think they know all your secrets.

Illus. by K. Tanner

Alexan, a combat trapsmith

Resources

Popular with thieves' guilds, hunting lodges, and nobles looking for added protection, you never want for work or opportunity. Whether employed by an organization or an individual, you can name your own price—and only the wealthy can afford you.

You can expect to receive assistance from an employer to help you do what you do best, usually in the form of extra combat trapsmith's kits. The amount of aid depends on your employer's wealth and needs, as well as the project for which you were hired. When not employed or when plying your trade on the side, you expect and require no support—you can manage quite well on your own.

COMBAT TRAPSMITHS IN THE WORLD

"We spent the day in town shopping. By the time we returned, he'd rigged our rooms top to bottom!"

—Elibor Gunter, battle trickster and friend of Alexan

Combat trapsmiths turn traps from elaborate set pieces into tactical battlefield additions, but otherwise don't have much overall impact on the world. Thus, you can easily incorporate a combat trapsmith into a campaign. For example, if the party raids the headquarters of a thieves' guild but cannot complete the mission, place a combat trapsmith among the surviving guild members. Even as the PCs try to make their escape, they might fall victim to devilish traps in previously cleared hallways and rooms.

Organization

Each combat trapsmith comes to his trade in his own way. No guild or organization links these staunch individualists, who freely join or leave an employer as their interests and values dictate. A combat trapsmith joins a larger group only if doing so makes sense to him; another might reject the same organization as offending his ideals or technical sensibilities. A group honored by the company of such an insidious and deadly specialist treats him with honor and respect.

NPC Reactions

The combat trapsmith's trade is of questionable legality in some places, and highly illicit in others. Those who care about such things and who know a character to be a combat trapsmith treat him with scorn, usually having an initial reaction of indifferent at best. Dwarves, gnomes, and others who appreciate skilled craftsmanship look upon his abilities

with a bit of awe, and are usually at least friendly to a combat trapsmith.

COMBAT TRAPSMITH LORE

Characters with ranks in Knowledge (local) can research combat trapsmiths to learn more about them. When a character succeeds on a skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 10: Combat trapsmiths are equally skilled at creating and disabling nasty traps.

DC 15: A skilled combat trapsmith can whip up a trap in a few moments that might take an ordinary person hours or days.

DC 20: Some combat trapsmiths can make traps seemingly out of almost nothing.

DC 30: Characters who achieve this level of success can learn important details about specific combat trapsmiths in your campaign, including a notable individual, the area in which he operates, and the kinds of traps in which he specializes.

Members of a local thieves' guild always know who the combat trapsmiths are within their city, even if none are currently working for the guild. PCs wishing to meet a specific combat trapsmith should contact his employer (if he has one) or the guildmaster. This information never comes cheap.

COMBAT TRAPSMITHS IN THE GAME

Combat trapsmiths work best in campaigns set within an urban environment, particularly if the PCs have a home base to protect. Some wilderness-based campaigns might also provide enough opportunities to keep combat trapsmiths busy. Players who enjoy establishing and protecting a home base for their characters, or who are looking for a new direction for their rogues, might enjoy playing combat trapsmiths. Engineering-focused dwarves and gnomes find the class especially appealing.

Even a single combat trapsmith NPC can make an interesting series of encounters, harassing the PCs with infuriating new traps in areas they thought were clear. The party faces a substantial challenge in tracking down and putting a stop to the interference, especially if the combat trapsmith has an influential employer.

Adaptation

The combat trapsmith prestige class requires no special rules sets and can fit into any campaign. Additional trap effects are easy to design, following the trapmaking guidelines in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* and the examples in the above list. For a stronger magical theme, consider adding a level of spellcaster to the prerequisite and expanding the range of traps to encompass low-level spell-like effects (such as *hypnotism*, *daze monster*, *shatter*, or *cause fear*).

Sample Encounter

Alexan was assigned to a group of irregulars during a recent war. Having grown up as a hunter and trapper, he attempted to put his snare-laying experience to use against the enemy but worked too slowly for the hit-and-run tactics of his brigade. After the war, Alexan honed his craft until he could set up a trap in a fraction of his previous best time.

EL 11: The PCs most likely encounter Alexan in the wilds admiring his latest creation. Although no longer a soldier, he still enjoys setting up traps against roughly human-sized creatures. He usually takes down his traps shortly after installing them, having no desire to cause the accidental death of a forester or traveler. The PCs might locate one of his traps and be impressed by its ingenuity, or they might dismantle it to prevent the hazard, not understanding Alexan's intent.

ALEXAN **CR 11**

Male human scout 9/combat trapsmith 2
N Medium humanoid
Init +4; **Senses** Listen +12, Spot +14
Languages Common, Elven

AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 19; Dodge, Mobility, uncanny dodge
(+3 Dex, +5 armor, +1 deflection)
hp 73 (11 HD)
Resist evasion
Fort +9, **Ref** +14, **Will** +3; trap sense +1

Speed 45 ft. (9 squares); Shot on the Run
Melee *+1 longsword* +10/+5 (1d8+3/19–20)
Ranged *+2 composite longbow* +12/+7 (1d8+4/×3)
Base Atk +7; **Grp** +9
Atk Options Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, skirmish (+3d6, +2 AC)
Special Actions combat trapping (enfeebler, footspiker, scorcher; DC 13)
Combat Gear 2 *potions of cure moderate wounds*

Abilities Str 14, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 8
SQ battle fortitude +1, camouflage (use Hide in terrain that doesn't grant cover or concealment), flawless stride, trackless step, trap sense +1, trapfinding
Feats Dash*, Dodge, Lightning Reflexes[B], Mobility[B], Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Shot on the Run, Skill Focus (Craft [trapmaking])[B]
*Feat described in *Complete Warrior*
Skills Appraise (alchemy, traps) +3, Balance +19, Craft (alchemy) +13, Craft (trapmaking) +18, Disable Device +17, Hide +17, Jump +8, Listen +12, Move Silently +17, Search +15, Spot +14, Survival +0 (+2 following tracks), Tumble +17
Possessions combat gear plus *+3 leather armor*, *+1 longsword*, *+2 composite longbow* (+2 Str bonus) with 60 arrows, *ring of protection +1*, combat trapsmith's kit, masterwork thieves' tools

Battle Fortitude (Ex) Bonus on initiative checks and Fortitude saves while wearing light or no armor and carrying a light load. Included above. *Complete Adventurer* 12.
Flawless Stride (Ex) Alexan ignores movement penalties from any sort of hindering terrain. *Complete Adventurer* 13.

FORTUNE'S FRIEND

"Don't worry about it. I have a feeling our luck is about to change."
—Sar Pios, layabout and fortune's friend

The fortune's friend lives by his luck. He doesn't worry about much of anything, including where his next meal comes from, and trusts to luck—perhaps more than he should.

BECOMING A FORTUNE'S FRIEND

Clerics of Olidammara, monks, and rogues qualify most easily for this prestige class and make up the largest group within it, though every class finds representation. To adopt the ways of the fortune's friend, a character need only embrace his luck.

Entry Requirements

Base Attack Bonus: +3.
Skills: Any skill 8 ranks.
Feats: Any luck feat.

CLASS FEATURES

A fortune's friend survives by and trusts to his luck.

Spellcasting: At each even-numbered level, you gain new spells per day and an increase in caster level (and spells known, if applicable) as if you had also gained a level in a spellcasting class to which you belonged before adding the prestige class level. You do not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained. If you had more than one spellcasting class before becoming a fortune's friend, you must decide to which class to add each level for the purpose of determining spells per day, caster level, and spells known.

Easy Luck (Ex): Luck comes to you naturally. The swift or immediate action to use a luck feat (page 72) does not count against your limit of one swift action per turn. However, you still can't expend a luck reroll more than once per turn to influence the same result.

Extra Fortune (Ex): At each odd-numbered level, you gain one extra luck reroll per day. This reroll is in addition to those granted by luck feats.

More Luck than Skill (Ex): Even if you have some talent in a particular area, you still depend on your luck to see you through. Once per day as a swift action, you can add your class level as a luck bonus on all skill checks you make until the start of your next turn.

Bonus Luck Feat: At 2nd and 4th level, you gain a bonus luck feat for which you meet the prerequisite. See page 75 for a complete list of luck feats.

Fortune's Favorite (Ex): By 3rd level, you have learned to rely on your luck to stay alive. Once per day as an immediate action, you can add your class level as a luck bonus on all saving throws you make until the start of your next turn.

Lucky Strike (Ex): Even the greatest warriors, those who train and drill constantly, occasionally win through sheer luck, so why shouldn't you? Beginning at 5th level, once per day as a swift action, you can add your class level as a luck bonus on all attack rolls you make until the start of your next turn.

PLAYING A FORTUNE'S FRIEND

Who needs skill? You've got luck on your side! Even in the heat of battle, when your very life is at stake, you remain calm and cheerful, confident that something will give you and your comrades the upper hand. Your carefree attitude is uplifting to some and grating to others. To the latter you say, "Sour grapes!" They are envious of your ability to slide through life without a care, easily finding food, gold, lodging, and love. In your rare contemplative moments, you feel sorry for those who have to work so hard to make ends meet.

Combat

As a fortune's friend, you are an unusual combatant, often jumping in over your head and relying on luck to get you out of a jam. Your talent isn't a license to be stupid, though. You're lucky, not invulnerable, and your good fortune doesn't necessarily protect your allies.

Advancement

You don't become a fortune's friend so much as realize you've always been one. From your earliest days, good things happened to you, and others would comment on

THE GREAT ESCAPE

"It wasn't easy, y'know? First I had to get past them bars, see. Inch-thick steel! How ya gonna get through that without magic?

"Well, I got me a connection on the outside. Someone who wants to see me get outta there right quick. So I receives a little present: a loaf o' fresh bread in a wood box. Now the warden, he's pretty smart for a bugbear, so he cuts up the bread into little slices to check for hidden shivs and files. He don't find none, so he lets me have the bread. The fool lets me have the box, too—for a few minutes while I'm eatin' the bread, anyway. He watches me the whole time, so I takes my time chewin' the bread and eyein' that box. Then I seen it—in the grain o' the wood is a long sliver o' metal.

"I hide my hand behind the loaf and even give the warden a piece. He ain't no fool, like I said, so he takes it but doesn't eat it right way. But I's pickin' at that sliver with my hidden hand. By the time I finish the bread I got me a wee blade o' adamantine.

"So I sets to work on the bars that night, sawin' away with that little sliver. I only gotta cut out two bars to get out, and I finish up just before dawn. All sneaky-like I slips out the window, takin' the sawed-off bars with me fer weapons. But I didn't need 'em. I kept runnin' 'til noon and ain't been back since."

Table 2–7: The Fortune's Friend Hit Die: d6

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spellcasting
1st	+0	+0	+2	+0	Easy luck, extra fortune, more luck than skill	—
2nd	+1	+0	+3	+0	Bonus luck feat	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
3rd	+1	+1	+3	+1	Extra fortune, fortune's favorite	—
4th	+2	+1	+4	+1	Bonus luck feat	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
5th	+2	+1	+4	+1	Extra fortune, lucky strike	—

Class Skills (6 + Int modifier per level): Balance, Bluff, Climb, Craft, Decipher Script, Diplomacy, Disable Device, Disguise, Escape Artist, Gather Information, Hide, Jump, Listen, Move Silently, Open Lock, Perform, Profession, Search, Sleight of Hand, Spot, Swim, Tumble, Use Magic Device, Use Rope.

how lucky you were. As you grew older you trusted more and more to your luck, and it never let you down. Eventually you forswore practice and discipline, relying entirely on your luck to get by. On that day you truly became a fortune's friend.

You pick up bits of know-how here and there, which translate into a smattering of skills: some generally useful (such as Spot) and some of narrower utility (such as Use Rope). Having a varied repertoire of skills comes in handy, even if you don't practice them often. Of course, you can't go wrong selecting even more luck feats. Each one not only gives you a new avenue of luck to explore, but another crucial luck reroll.

Resources

As in everything else, you've been fortunate in finding the right people to know. Many enjoy your company and marvel at your incredible string of luck. However, since most people secretly envy your good fortune, these contacts are at best helpful acquaintances. Most such so-called friends are quick to abandon you when the going gets tough. For the most part, your luck is all you have.

FORTUNE'S FRIENDS IN THE WORLD

"I used to want to be that guy. Good things always seem to happen to him. But you know what? That life is too unpredictable even for me, never knowing where your next meal is going to come from."

—Dram Cicaeda,
man on the street

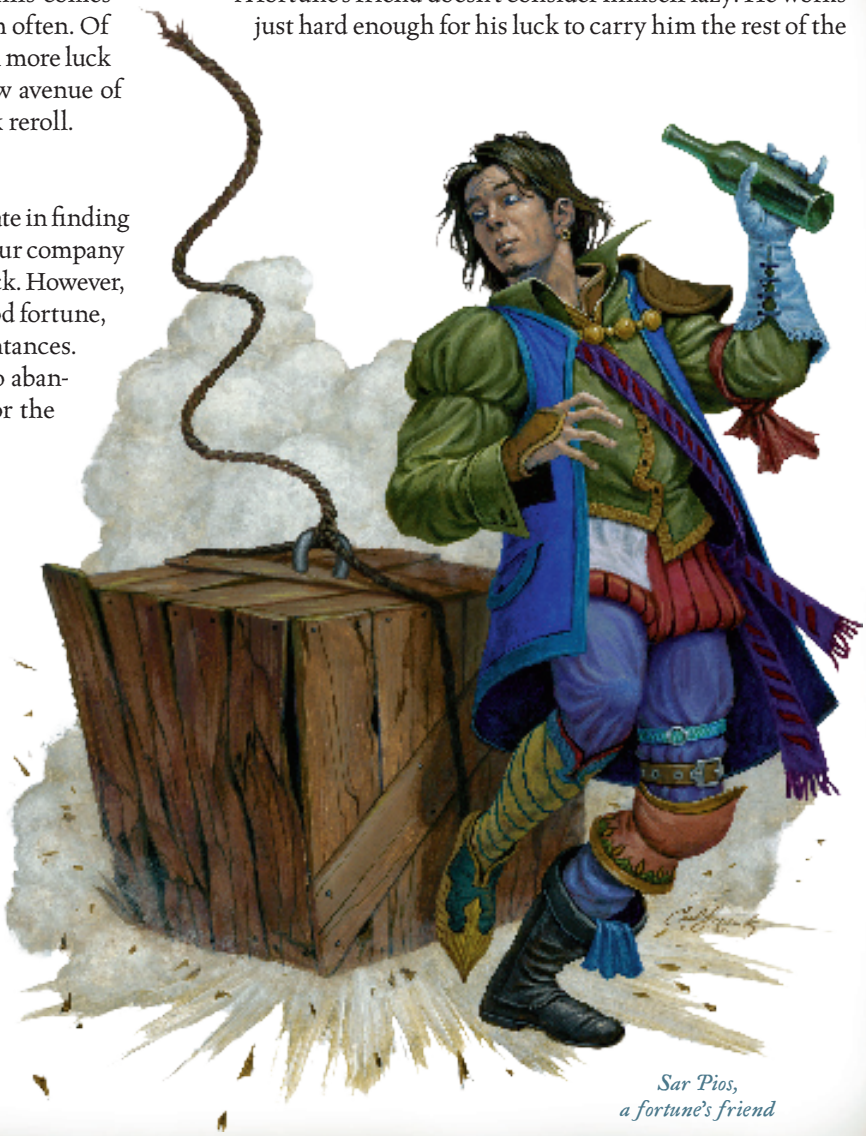
Individualistic and free-wheeling, fortune's friends fit easily into any campaign that uses the luck rules.

Organization

Though a fortune's friend belongs to no one but himself, he seeks out companionship wherever he can find it. He isn't picky about his comrades, as long as they aren't judgmental about him. This arrangement does not always work out well, however. Some who recognize his abilities keep a fortune's friend around simply as a good-luck charm. More unscrupulous groups take advantage of his good fortune, making him the fall guy for their crimes or sending him on suicide missions.

NPC Reactions

A fortune's friend doesn't consider himself lazy: He works just hard enough for his luck to carry him the rest of the



Illus. by C. Frank

Sar Pios,
a fortune's friend

way. This apparent tendency toward laziness causes many people to turn against a fortune's friend.

Dwarves in particular despise those who benefit without hard work. A dwarf who recognizes a fortune's friend has an initial unfriendly attitude toward him, and Diplomacy checks to influence that attitude have a –10 penalty. Even the luckiest fortune's friend is unlikely to convince a dwarf to be helpful toward him. Other characters treat a fortune's friend with a mixture of envy and awe. Most are neutral overall: They appreciate his abilities but resent his easy life. Two fortune's friends, should they meet, repel one another like similar magnetic poles.

FORTUNE'S FRIEND LORE

Characters with ranks in Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (local) can research fortune's friends to learn more about them. When a character succeeds on a skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 10: A fortune's friend is lucky. Almost *too* lucky.

DC 15: A fortune's friend lives by luck alone. Nothing ever seems to get him down because—for him at least—everything works out in the end.

DC 20: A fortune's friend can sometimes cheat death.

PCs rarely go looking for a fortune's friend. A meeting just happens, as long as that would be lucky for him.

FORTUNE'S FRIENDS IN THE GAME

Fortune's friends can be fascinating if frustrating antagonists, but they work better as allies, cohorts, or minions of more powerful foes. They make great comedic foils, bringing their brash personalities to bear against the PCs in over-the-top, melodramatic ways.

Players who like to have some control over their characters' luck should enjoy this prestige class, which can work easily with any character type. It might also appeal to those playing clerics or worshipers of a deity of fortune, particularly if they have access to the Luck domain. One fortune's friend can join a party without endangering the overall scheme of things.

Adaptation

A fortune's friend fits easily into almost any campaign world. You can customize the prestige class by specifying his source of luck as a deity: Olidammara in the core setting, Tymora in Faerûn, the Traveler in the world of Eberron, or an equivalent deity of your campaign. To strengthen this divine theme, you could adjust the entry requirements to include 4 ranks in Knowledge (religion) and perhaps being a worshiper of the appropriate deity.

Sample Encounter

A fortune's friend doesn't stand out in a crowd, unless his incredible luck is on display. Some fortune's friends supplement their income with petty larceny, though if their luck fails, they might end up in jail for a while.

EL 8: Sar Pios's luck hasn't really been with him the past few days, and he's starting to get hungry. In order to survive until his luck changes, he has gone back to picking pockets. This time, though, he's been caught with his hand in the cookie jar—or rather, a PC's coin purse.

SAR PIOS **CR 8**

Male human fighter 2/rogue 3/fortune's friend 3
CN Medium humanoid
Init +3, Lucky Start; **Senses** Listen +11, Spot +11
Language Common

AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 12; Dodge, Mobility (+3 Dex, +2 armor)
hp 50 (8 HD)
Resist evasion
Fort +7, **Ref** +9, **Will** +4

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares); Spring Attack
Melee mwk dagger +7 (1d4+1/19–20)
Ranged mwk dagger +9 (1d4+1/19–20)
Base Atk +5; **Grp** +6
Atk Options Fortuitous Strike, luck reroll 6/day
Special Actions fortune's favorite (+3 saves), more luck than skill (+3 skill checks), sneak attack +3d6
Combat Gear 2 *potions of cure light wounds*

Abilities Str 12, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 8
SQ trap sense +1, trapfinding
Feats Advantageous Avoidance[B]*, Dodge[B], Fortuitous Strike*, Mobility[B], Lucky Catch*, Lucky Start[B]*, Spring Attack
*New feat described in Chapter 3
Skills Balance +5, Climb +12, Hide +9, Intimidate +4, Jump +12, Listen +11, Move Silently +9, Sleight of Hand +4, Spot +11, Tumble +12
Possessions combat gear plus leather armor, 2 masterwork daggers, *gray bag of tricks, deck of illusions*

GRAY GUARD

"Does your stout armor give you peace of mind? Does your holy sword help you sleep at night? Mine do not."

—Ambros Brasmere, gray guard

The typical image of a paladin is a proud knight of noble bearing, resplendent in armor bright as sunlight and bearing a sword shining with the purity of his cause. This archetype, upheld by both idealistic knights and their enemies, has killed countless honorable warriors. Taking a cue from the enemies of their faith, many good-aligned religions have established secretive orders of the most dedicated and hardened soldiers. These gray guards are less restrained by their knightly vows, doing what must be done, no matter how unpleasant.

BECOMING A GRAY GUARD

Only the most realistic and battleworn paladins become gray guards. They know the cruelties of the world cannot be expunged merely by good example and kind words. Though no less virtuous than other paladins, they join the order's bloodstained ranks out of a sense of necessity. Those who seek membership merely because they resent the yoke of their code of conduct are unfit to be gray guards or paladins;

such weak-willed individuals are swiftly excommunicated from both orders.

Gray guards most commonly follow deities concerned with justice, such as Heironeous, Tyr, or St. Cuthbert.

Entry Requirements

Alignment: Lawful good.
Skills: Knowledge (religion) 8 ranks, Sense Motive 4 ranks.
Special: Lay on hands class feature.
Special: Must adhere to a code of conduct that prevents the character from performing evil acts.

CLASS FEATURES

You do what needs to be done for the betterment of your cause. Your freedom to act increases as you progress in level, letting you deal with evil as few pure paladins can, yet at the same time attracting the suspicion of those you are sworn to aid and protect.

Spellcasting: At each even-numbered level, you gain new spells per day and an increase in caster level (and spells known, if applicable) as if you had also gained a level in a divine spellcasting class to which you belonged before adding the prestige class level. You do not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained. If you had more than one divine spellcasting class before becoming a gray guard, you must decide to which class to add each level for the purpose of determining spells per day, caster level, and spells known.

Sacrament of Trust: Upon entering this prestige class, you take a vow of allegiance to your faith beyond that of any ordinary paladin. This vow grants you a measure of freedom to act on your cause's behalf without fear of retribution should your duties require you to break your code of conduct. Dishonorable acts still cause you to lose both gray guard and paladin class features until you atone, but this infraction is considered much less severe than it would be for a paladin.

Thus, whenever you seek to atone for deeds that you willingly commit in the name of your faith but that break your code of conduct, a cleric casting an *atonement* spell on your behalf does not expend 500 XP as is normally required. This reprieve applies only to acts intended to further the cause of righteousness and the gray guard's faith. No XP cost applies to a gray guard atoning after beating a confession from a heretic, for example, but the cost would have to be paid for one who started a barroom brawl.

Lay on Hands (Su): This ability is identical to the paladin class feature of the same name (*PH* 44). Levels of gray guard stack with other class levels that grant lay on hands to determine the ability's total healing capacity.

Debilitating Touch (Su): At 2nd level, you learn to channel your lay on hands ability into a painful touch attack. Many gray guards use debilitating touch during interrogation, since it reduces the target's ability to successfully bluff or resist magical effects. Using debilitating touch does not provoke attacks of opportunity. An opponent hit by this attack is sickened for 5 rounds. Using this ability costs 5 points of your daily healing allotment. A successful Fortitude save (DC 10 + your gray guard level + your Cha modifier) negates the effect.

Smite Evil (Su): Beginning at 3rd level, you can smite evil once per day. See the paladin class feature (*PH* 44). At 8th level, you can smite evil one additional time per day. Levels of other classes that grant the smite evil class feature stack for the purpose of determining the extra damage dealt. For example, a 5th-level paladin/5th-level gray guard delivering a smite evil attack adds 10 points of damage to the attack.

Justice Blade (Su): By 4th level, you have learned that suffering and injustice are not the exclusive province of evil. You can use your smite evil ability to instead punish creatures of chaotic alignment. Using this ability expends one daily use of your smite evil class feature and works identically in all other ways, but its effect applies only to chaotic targets. Whenever you choose to smite an opponent, you must declare whether you are using this ability to smite evil or chaos. If you accidentally smite a creature of an alignment other than that declared, the smite has no effect but the ability is still used up.

Table 2–8: The Gray Guard — Hit Die: d10

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spellcasting
1st	+1	+2	+0	+2	Sacrament of trust, lay on hands	—
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+3	Debilitating touch	+1 level of existing divine spellcasting class
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+3	Smite evil 1/day	—
4th	+4	+4	+1	+4	Justice blade (chaos)	+1 level of existing divine spellcasting class
5th	+5	+4	+1	+4	Devastating touch	—
6th	+6	+5	+2	+5	—	+1 level of existing divine spellcasting class
7th	+7	+5	+2	+5	Unbound justice	—
8th	+8	+6	+2	+6	Smite evil 2/day	+1 level of existing divine spellcasting class
9th	+9	+6	+3	+6	Justice blade (all alignments)	—
10th	+10	+7	+3	+7	Sacrament of the true faith	+1 level of existing divine spellcasting class

Class Skills (2 + Int modifier per level): Bluff, Concentration, Disguise, Forgery, Handle Animal, Heal, Intimidate, Knowledge (local), Knowledge (nobility and royalty), Knowledge (religion), Ride, Sense Motive.

Beginning at 9th level, you can use justice blade to smite creatures of any alignment. You need not declare an alignment before making the smite attack, although if the attack misses, that use of smite is still used up for the day.

Devastating Touch (Su): When you attain 5th level, your deity shows its approval of your grim work. From this point on, you can use your lay on hands ability to make a touch attack that harms your enemies. Using devastating touch does not provoke attacks of opportunity. You decide how many points of your daily healing allotment to expend after successfully touching a creature: Each point expended deals 1 point of damage to the target. A non-evil creature is allowed a Will save (DC 10 + your gray guard level + your Cha modifier) to halve the amount of damage dealt.

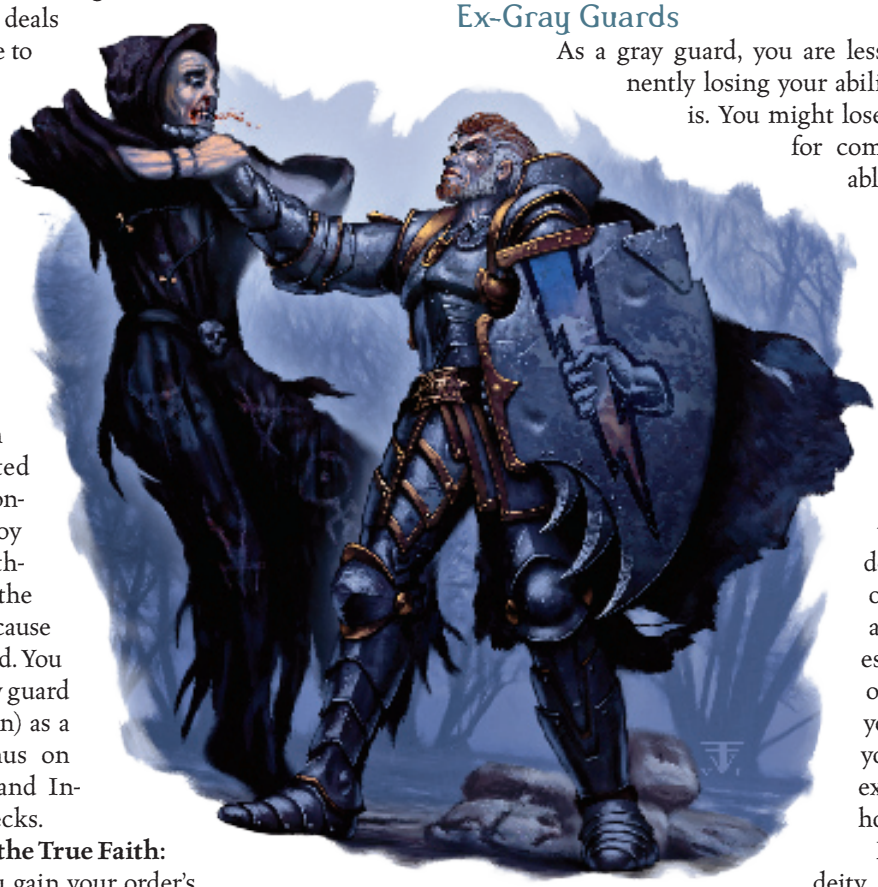
Unbound Justice (Ex): At 7th level, unrestricted by your code of honor, you can employ unorthodox methods that are all the more effective because they're unexpected. You add half your gray guard level (round down) as a competence bonus on Bluff, Disguise, and Intimidate skill checks.

Sacrament of the True Faith: At 10th level, you gain your order's full confidence. You are granted the freedom to act on behalf of your faith as you deem necessary. Thus, you never risk losing your class abilities in the pursuit of a just cause and never need to atone for violating your code of conduct.

This trust does not grant you the freedom to act as violently or immorally as you wish, however. Release from your code of conduct depends on your acting as an exemplar of your order's ideals. If you violate this trust by habitually acting in an immoral or corrupt manner, the leaders or deity of your faith might revoke their blessing and banish you from the ranks of the faithful (see Ex-Gray Guards, below).

Code of Conduct: As a gray guard, you are held to the same code of conduct as a paladin. You must be of lawful good alignment and must never willingly commit an evil act. You must also pledge to respect legitimate authority, act with honor (not lying, cheating, using poison, and the like), aid the needy, and punish those who harm the innocent. If you contravene your code of conduct, you must atone for the transgression or lose all class abilities from both gray guard and paladin levels. As you advance in the prestige class, this code becomes more flexible. However, its tenets still apply: You can never break your code without good reason.

Gray guards can freely multiclass between paladin and gray guard.



Illus. by F. Vohwinkel

Ambros Brasmere, a gray guard

Ex-Gray Guards

As a gray guard, you are less at risk of permanently losing your abilities than a paladin is. You might lose them temporarily for committing dishonorable acts, but you are granted clemency for performing such deeds in the name of your faith and can atone more easily. Nevertheless, if you commit unforgivably evil acts (such as slaughtering innocents or despoiling a temple of your faith), take action that opposes your faith's tenets, or habitually violate your code of conduct, you risk permanent expulsion from the holy order.

If at any time your deity or a jury of your faith's leaders finds you guilty of grossly abusing the freedom of the order, you permanently lose both gray guard and paladin class abilities (including the service of your special mount, but not weapon, armor, and shield proficiencies) and can never again advance in either class. Even the *atonement* spell cannot restore a fallen gray guard's abilities after he is exiled. Before a character enters this prestige class, his player and the DM should discuss and agree on what acts constitute gross abuse.

Levels of gray guard are treated as levels of paladin for the purpose of advancing in the blackguard prestige class.

PLAYING A GRAY GUARD

You have seen the horrible reality of the world: Children dying in the gutter as the rich feast a hedge-wall away; law used to imprison and terrify those it was created to protect;

the supposedly devout ignoring and abusing those they deem beneath their interest or contrary to their faith. The most insidious evil wears a cloak of righteousness and seduces with honeyed words. Your faith's leadership realizes that many paladins' inflexible interpretation of their code of conduct not only allows such foulness to remain hidden but even aids its spread. As a gray guard, you have earned the freedom to seek out and destroy corruption through any means necessary.

Although you work toward the same goals as other members of your faith, many within it do not trust you. They believe that you and your fellows at best flirt with corruption and at worst embrace it. Paladins see freedom from their code of conduct as weakness, an inability to mete out justice through honorable means, and do not consider you to be their equal.

You are not proud of your role, but you accept that one must sometimes embrace a lesser evil to combat greater injustice. Your freedom is not a boon but a loss of innocence, a permanent tarnish on a once-pristine soul. Solidifying your resolve, you face the world of cruel reality, ready to do battle just as valiantly as any paladin but also just as brutally as the monstrosities you oppose.

Combat

In battle you are not just a warrior, but also a judge. If you can, you engage your opponent in honorable combat to prove the valor of your cause. However, you are no fool. If the only sure way to finish the high priest of a cult of Vecna is to stab him as he sleeps or lie in wait and attack from the shadows, you make such sacrifices of character to put a permanent end to the threat. Thus, your tactics must change to suit the enemy and the conditions of battle.

Your mercy also must conform to the necessities of the moment. Ideally you would bring defeated enemies before the proper authorities for righteous judgment, but the reality of your situation might prevent you from taking prisoners, especially if they are likely to escape or impede your greater aims. Some powerful threats simply cannot be permitted to live and potentially rise again. A momentary prayer and a coup de grace end the lives of many of your foes.

Advancement

As a paladin, you were frustrated by members of that noble order who seemed oblivious to the greater good, righting specific wrongs while ignoring others. You repeatedly came into conflict with your peers, even violating your code of conduct to satisfy your sense of justice. You were finally approached by leaders of your church or a stern knight in tarnished armor, who asked how much you would sacrifice for your faith and a clean conscience.

As a gray guard, you understand that your enemies' tactics might aid you as well. Skills that you might have disdained before, such as Bluff, Disguise, Intimidate, or even Move Silently, Hide, and Open Lock can be invaluable in your work. Feats such as Mobility, Spring Attack, and Stealthy help you get at the greatest threat and bring it down. In addition, you are ever on the hunt for items that cloak your aura of good and any other ties to your faith that your enemies' magic might reveal.

Resources

Although your order sometimes points you toward suspected evils, you are primarily a knight-errant, doing what you can wherever you are needed. The grim few who make up your order aid you as much as they can, but their ranks are small. Primarily you can depend only on your rare allies.

As a member of an organized religion, you might be able to draw upon the resources of your church. However, you often face prejudice from those within your own order: Instead of being helpful, they treat you indifferently or worse. Those who understand and recognize your service provide spellcasting and equipment for half the normal cost, but those who distrust you might not offer aid even at standard prices.

GRAY GUARDS IN THE WORLD

"How're we supposed to see the pally comin' when 'e wears armor blacker than ours?"

—Griv "Goblin Father" Chos, unfortunate cultist guard

In any campaign featuring less than black-and-white morality, gray guards might rise from the ranks of the most devout warriors to challenge hidden evils and work toward sweeping change. Such orders give paladins the opportunity to wage war against injustice without undue worry about getting their hands dirty.

Organization

Orders of gray guards might be created as part of any lawful- or good-aligned religion that sponsors paladins. The organization of such an order might vary dramatically from faith to faith, as well as how others within their church perceive them. Some gray guards might form covert cells that parallel their church's "legitimate" paladin orders.

A typical order of gray guards works separately from a church's hierarchy of paladins. Though rarely hidden, the order is not discussed openly by officials of the faith. Much like inquisitors or witch hunters, gray guards are a feared aspect of the church that few care to acknowledge.

Only a few among the faith's paladins have what it takes to become gray guards. Once chosen, they are free of the paladin's rigid code but are still carefully watched. Churches monitor their work, knowing that such proximity to the wicked can endanger their faith. Gray guards often seek out a place of worship to confess the burdens on their souls, which they see as a sacred duty.

Gray guards have no holdings, no halls of triumph, and only the most limited rosters of duty. Among them only two ranks exist: gray guard and captain (usually a veteran of the

order's cause). The order has an unofficial hierarchy based on experience and seniority, but only a captain has direct authority over members. In such a small organization, the captain knows every knight and assigns direction as suits the personality and abilities of each. Other interests within the church (such as concerned priests and rival paladins) frequently try to influence or hinder the work of the gray guards. In order to shield them from such internal politics, gray guards are often sent far afield, with instructions to report for orders only infrequently.

NPC Reactions

Most folk assume gray guards are typical warriors or mercenaries and treat them as such. The members of a gray guard's own faith treat him with widely differing attitudes. Many within the church see the very existence of the order as conceding to evil, the first step to becoming no better than those the faith would oppose. Those whom you would protect abhor your very existence and might even hinder you. Others understand the need for distasteful action to root out evil and can be helpful toward the order. Paladins disdain gray guards, rarely having attitudes warmer than indifferent toward them.

GRAY GUARD LORE

Characters with ranks in Knowledge (religion) can research gray guards to learn more about them. When a character succeeds on a skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 10: Gray guards are paladins who aren't bound by a code of conduct.

DC 15: Gray guards seek out injustice in all its forms, often using the tools and methods of their enemies against them.

DC 20: Paladins often distrust them, but gray guards take their code of conduct just as seriously as other holy warriors do and violate its tenets only in the best interest of their faith.

DC 30: Characters who achieve this level of success can learn important details about gray guards in your campaign, including faiths that sponsor such orders, notable members, the areas where they currently operate, and the kinds of activities they undertake.

Servants of religions that support orders of gray guards should have little problem contacting members through church officials. Characters without such connections might be able to leave messages for gray guards in care of members of the same faith.

GRAY GUARDS IN THE GAME

Gray guards are relatively easy to integrate into any campaign featuring powerful religions. The notion that such devout organizations have semisecret agents working toward their diverse causes probably doesn't stretch the imagination. Nor does the concept that such powerful groups—no matter how pure they might appear—might resort to less than ethical means of dealing with their hated opponents.

The easiest way to introduce gray guards into your campaign is to have the PCs encounter one working toward a parallel goal. Presenting a gray guard as a potential ally gives the PCs a chance to ask questions and learn more about the order. After such an encounter, a devoted but frustrated paladin within the party might pursue membership. Alternatively, an NPC gray guard might be a rival to a PC paladin, producing interesting tension.

Adaptation

If gray guards don't appeal to you as presented, you can readily convert their order to fill other niches. With their freedom to exact justice on those of any alignment, gray guards make excellent inquisitors. Such church investigators might openly enforce their faith's beliefs, hunting down heretics, witches, or any others viewed as violating holy law. Alternatively, they might serve as church police, with the authority to seek out injustices among the devout or monitor paladins' adherence to their code of conduct. Instead of making the gray guard a prestige class, you can adjust the paladin class to grant its features at advanced levels, representing a higher order free to right wrongs as it sees fit.

Sample Encounter

PCs hunting a villain who hides behind a mask of righteousness might not be the only ones on their target's trail. Such lurking evil can attract the attention of a gray guard.

EL 11: For the last two years, Ambros Brasmere has hunted an elusive cult of the demon prince Malcanthet, Queen of Succubi. His recent investigations suggest that the popular owner of a local theater has connections to the cult. This prominent socialite is ever surrounded by his retinue of attendants, bodyguards, and sycophants, any of whom might be a fiend in disguise or merely an infatuated innocent. Ambros seeks a few allies to help him force his way past the suspected cultist's clique and get the information he needs, through any means necessary.

AMBROS BRASMERE **CR 11**

Male half-elf paladin 7/gray guard 4
LG Medium humanoid
Init +0; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +3, Spot +3
Aura courage (10 ft., allies +4 against fear)
Languages Common, Elven

AC 22, touch 10, flat-footed 22
(+9 armor, +3 shield)
hp 76 (11 HD)
Immune disease, fear, sleep
Fort +14, **Ref** +7, **Will** +14 (+16 against enchantments)

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee +2 *longsword* +15/+10/+5 (1d8+4/19–20)
Base Atk +11; **Grp** +13
Atk Options smite evil or chaos 3/day (+3 attack, +11 damage)
Special Actions debilitating touch, lay on hands 33 points/day, turn undead 6/day (+5, 2d6+7, 4th)

Paladin Spells Prepared (CL 9th):
2nd—*undetectable alignment*
1st—*divine favor, protection from evil*
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th):
At will—*detect evil*
1/week—*remove disease*

Abilities Str 14, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 15, Cha 17
SQ sacrament of trust, special mount 1/day (heavy warhorse, 14 hours), strong aura of good
Feats Endurance, Diehard, Iron Will, Quick Draw
Skills Bluff +8, Climb +0, Concentration +2, Diplomacy +9, Disguise +3 (+5 acting), Gather Information +5, Handle Animal +6, Heal +4, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (religion) +8, Listen +3, Move Silently +0, Ride +2, Search +1, Sense Motive +7, Spot +3
Possessions *+1 silent moves full plate, +1 heavy steel shield, +2 longsword, cloak of resistance +1, ring of climbing, potion of pass without trace*, healer's kit, wooden holy symbol

MAGICAL TRICKSTER

"Don't make the mistake of assuming that spells are the only trick up my sleeve."

—Sorilae Hartsel, magical trickster

Relying as much on her wits as on her spellcasting prowess, the magical trickster can sacrifice her spellcasting ability to gain even greater access to skill tricks.

BECOMING A MAGICAL TRICKSTER

Although this prestige class supports spellcasting, it appeals mainly to casters with low hit points and few other class features, such as sorcerers and wizards. Sorcerers excel as magical tricksters, since they have plentiful spell uses with which to power skill tricks. On the divine side, the prestige class most appeals to favored souls, shugenjas, and spirit shamans (all described in *Complete Divine*), all of whom also have a large number of daily spell uses. Clerics and druids rarely bother with the class, except for worshipers of trickster deities.

Entry Requirements

Feats: Any one metamagic feat.
Spellcasting: Ability to cast 3rd-level spells.
Skill Tricks: Any two.

CLASS FEATURES

A magical trickster focuses on skill tricks, even sacrificing spells for greater access to them.

Spellcasting: At each level after 1st, you gain new spells per day and an increase in caster level (and spells known, if applicable) as if you had also gained a level in a spellcasting class to which you belonged before adding the prestige class level. You do not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained. If you had more than one spellcasting class before becoming a magical trickster, you must decide to which class to add each level for the purpose of determining spells per day, caster level, and spells known.

Bonus Trick: At 1st level, and again at 3rd level, you gain a bonus skill trick for which you meet the prerequisite. These bonus tricks do not cost skill points and do not count against your maximum number of skill tricks available.

Spontaneous Trickster (Su): You can channel magical potential into using skill tricks more often, effectively "recharging" them. As a swift action, you can "lose" any spell slot or prepared spell of 1st level or higher to perform a trick that you have already used in the encounter.

Bonus Metamagic Feat: At 2nd level, you gain a bonus metamagic feat for which you meet the prerequisite.

Metamagic Trick (Ex): Beginning at 3rd level, you understand how to apply the principle of tricks to your spellcasting. Once per day you can apply the effect of any one metamagic feat you know to a spell as you cast it without altering the spell's effective level. The spell slot adjustment of the metamagic feat can't exceed four.

Tricky Magic (Ex): At 3rd level, you have mastered incorporating tricks into your spellcasting routines. On any round that you perform a skill trick, the save DC of the next spell you cast that round is increased by 1.

PLAYING A MAGICAL TRICKSTER

You are unpredictable and extremely adaptable. As long as you still have spells available to cast, your bag of skill tricks is nearly unlimited, giving you an opportunity to overcome most challenges.

You are drawn to others who can perform skill tricks, and from them you learn yet more. Becoming a trick expert instantly affiliates you with a very loose fellowship of tricksters (battle, uncanny, and magical). You don't get along with every trickster you meet, though: Some jealously guard their secrets and view others of their kind as rivals.

Table 2–9: The Magical Trickster **Hit Die: d6**

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spellcasting
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Bonus trick, spontaneous trickster	—
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	Bonus metamagic feat	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+3	Bonus trick, metamagic trick, tricky magic	+1 level of existing spellcasting class

Class Skills (4 + Int modifier per level): Bluff, Climb, Concentration, Craft, Diplomacy, Jump, Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (religion), Profession, Spellcraft, Tumble, Use Rope.

Combat

Your spells are even more valuable to you than a typical caster's, and you should use them judiciously. You walk a narrow line: On the one hand, you can enhance your combat effectiveness with your spontaneous tricks, but on the other, your allies depend on your spellcasting support. Such decisions depend on the structure of the party and the opponent you face. In a party with multiple casters, you have more freedom to use your tricks, while a party with several tricky characters needs your spells more.

Advancement

Whether you received a divine gift or extended your arcane knowledge, you discovered you had a natural talent for skill tricks and put yourself on the path to learning more. A mentor might have shown you how to tap into your magical ability to fuel your repertoire, or you might have learned it on your own through hours of meditation.

As a magical trickster, you readily adapt to any situation. No longer are you bound only by what spells you know or prepare. Your allies probably appreciate this flexibility—unless they have also focused their careers on learning tricks and resent your freedom and flexibility.

Even though you gain bonus skill tricks from this prestige class, you should continue to invest skill points in learning new tricks. The more you have, the more potent and unpredictable you become. Feats that grant bonus skill tricks, such as Freerunner (page 77), are good options, as are metamagic feats, which you can apply more easily to your spells than others can.

Resources

Although you might not have realized it when you became a magical trickster, you are part of a larger (albeit very loosely organized) group. The benefits and requirements of this group are few, but it does offer the camaraderie of shared experiences as well as the chance to learn new tricks. Nevertheless, tricksters owe no more to one another than do any other people with similar, nonbinding interests.

MAGICAL TRICKSTERS IN THE WORLD

"She mastered the difficult trick I'd just shown her, then suddenly pulled it off again without a thought. Why can't I do that?"

—Ameslan Trag, uncanny trickster

The magical trickster is relatively easy to integrate into a campaign that employs the skill trick rules. She works much like any other trickster character, except that her talent is powered by magic. Whether through divine favor or some lost arcane secret, her ability to flawlessly perform tricks again and again can be explained away by the source of her spellcasting ability.

Organization

Magical tricksters congregate with uncanny and battle tricksters when possible. Having come to the prestige class from different backgrounds, they have less in common with one another than they do with other tricksters. They swap techniques, introduce newly developed tricks and trick-supporting equipment and magic, and share experiences. Outside observers might assume such a meeting is part of a circus or carnival, with tricksters springing about performing for the enjoyment and education of onlookers.

These gatherings, though enjoyable, do not represent a structured organization. Magical tricksters looking to become part of something more permanent usually join groups that appreciate both their abilities and their moral choices: churches, arcane guilds, or druid circles.

NPC Reactions

A magical trickster can make other people frustrated or concerned. She can perform skill tricks over and over that others cannot easily repeat, even after years of practice. Other sorts of tricksters treat a known magical trickster with contempt and silence, and are almost always unfriendly. If she belonged to an organization before entering the prestige class, a magical trickster might be the subject of concern or quiet whispers among her colleagues and superiors. Although other members of the organization still respect her, their attitudes usually slip a step, such as from helpful to friendly or friendly to indifferent.

Common folk do not understand the difference between magical tricksters and other trickster classes, so their attitudes span the spectrum. However, because some tricksters use their abilities to take advantage of less talented folk, a victim of such exploitation has a negative view of all tricksters, magical or otherwise, and is unfriendly at best.

MAGICAL TRICKSTER LORE

Characters with ranks in Knowledge (arcana) can research magical tricksters to learn more about them. When a character succeeds on a skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 10: Magical tricksters combine magical talent with odd stunts relying on trained skill.

DC 15: Magical tricksters learn to pull off surprises with their magic just as they can with their skills.

DC 20: Magical tricksters can give up some of their magical power to perform stunts again and again.

DC 30: Characters who achieve this level of success can learn important details about specific magical tricksters in your campaign, including a notable individual, the area in which she operates, and the kinds of activities she undertakes.

PCs searching for a magical trickster who belongs to an organization can contact her through it. A magical trickster affiliated with no group is more difficult to track down, although other tricksters in the area probably know of her.

MAGICAL TRICKSTERS IN THE GAME

An NPC magical trickster makes an interesting and unpredictable opponent. She seems to be a typical spellcaster until she suddenly performs a powerful and difficult trick—then repeats it a moment later. Magical tricksters tend to avoid one another unless of the same faith, guild, or school, so you should probably avoid introducing more than one per encounter.

Players who like flexibility and variety should find the prestige class appealing. A magical trickster can serve the party with either her spells or her tricks, adapting as needed to a given encounter.

Adaptation

You can easily change this prestige class into a psionic trickster by replacing spells with psionic power points as the "currency" for reusing tricks. Rather than sacrificing a spell slot or prepared spell to recharge a trick, a psionic trickster expends 2 power points.

Sample Encounter

Magical tricksters seek out other trick users to discover new tricks. A PC who uses a skill trick in public might get an unexpected visit from a magical trickster.

EL 11: Sorilae Hartsel is an amazing, playful beauty with a cruel streak. She enjoys showing off her abilities, using them to seduce gullible tricksters into revealing their tricks, then abandoning her lovers to move on to the next game. If her skills alone are inadequate, she turns to charm spells to get what she wants. Sometimes she uses her newfound skills to humiliate and torment her unwitting mentors.

The PCs might stumble across Sorilae on her way from or to an assignation. If the party contains a trickster PC who seems an interesting prospect, she attempts to attract that character's attention with an eye to collecting a new trick.

Sorilae Hartsel, a magical trickster

Illus. by H. Lyon

SORILAE HARTSEL **CR 11**

Female human sorcerer 8/magical trickster 3
NE Medium humanoid
Init +2; **Senses** Listen +3, Spot +3
Languages Common, Draconic, empathic link

AC 14, touch 13, flat-footed 12; Dodge (+2 Dex, +1 deflection, +1 natural)
hp 36 (11 HD)
Fort +3, **Ref** +5, **Will** +10

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee mwk dagger +5 (1d4–1/19–20) or
Melee whip +4 (1d3–1 nonlethal)
Ranged mwk dagger +8 (1d4–1/19–20)
Base Atk +5; **Grp** +4
Atk Options skill tricks, tricky magic
Special Actions metamagic trick, spontaneous trickster
Combat Gear 3 *potions of cure moderate wounds*
Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 10th; 1d20 +12 to overcome SR):
5th (4/day)—*dominate person* (DC 20)
4th (6/day)—*charm monster* (DC 19), *phantasmal killer* (DC 19)
3rd (7/day)—*haste, heroism, fireball* (DC 18)
2nd (7/day)—*daze monster* (DC 17), *glitterdust* (DC 17), *touch of idiocy* (+4 melee touch; DC 17), *web* (DC 17)
1st (8/day)—*mage armor, magic missile, protection from evil, ray of enfeeblement* (+7 ranged touch; DC 16), *shield*
0 (6/day)—*acid splash* (+7 ranged touch), *detect magic, light, mage hand, mending, open/close, prestidigitation, ray of frost* (+7 ranged touch), *touch of fatigue* (+4 melee touch; DC 15)

Abilities Str 8, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 21
SQ familiar, share spells, spontaneous trickster
Feats Alertness[B] (if familiar within 5 ft.), Dodge, Extend Spell[B], Exotic Weapon Proficiency (whip)[B], Sweet Talker*, Spell Penetration, Still Spell[B]
*New feat described in Chapter 3
Skills Bluff +22, Concentration +14, Diplomacy +7, Disguise +5 (+7 acting), Escape Artist +2 (+4 involving ropes), Intimidate +7, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Listen +3, Sleight of Hand +5, Spellcraft +12, Spot +3, Use Rope +8

Skill Tricks* Collector of Stories, False Theurgy, Group Fake-Out, Never Outnumbered, Swift Concentration, Timely Misdirection, Whip Climber
*Described in Chapter 3
Possessions combat gear plus 2 masterwork daggers, *amulet of natural armor +1, ring of protection +1, cloak of Charisma +4,* jewelry worth 200 gp

Dos, Tiny Viper Familiar **CR —**
NE Tiny magical beast (augmented animal)
Init +3; **Senses** scent; Listen +6, Spot +6
Languages empathic link, speak with master, speak with reptiles

AC 21, touch 15, flat-footed 18
(+2 size, +3 Dex, +6 natural)
hp 16 (8 HD)
Resist improved evasion
Fort +3, **Ref** +6, **Will** +10

Speed 15 ft. (3 squares), climb 15 ft., swim 15 ft.
Melee bite +8 (1 plus poison)
Space 2-1/2 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.
Base Atk +5; **Grp** –6
Atk Options deliver touch spells, poison (Fort DC 10, 1d6 Con/1d6 Con)

Abilities Str 4, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 9, Wis 12, Cha 2
Feats Weapon Finesse
Skills Bluff +10, Balance +11, Climb +11, Concentration +14, Hide +15, Listen +6, Spot +6

MALCONVOKER

"Take him, my slaves! Drag his soul back to your dark masters!"
—Argyll Te'Shea, servant of Pelor and malconvoker

The standard concept of the perpetual war between good and evil is clichéd to some: a black-and-white vision of reality, suitable only for religious sermonizing. A few who understand the complexity of the battles that rage throughout the planes have taken up a dangerous path, entering into powerful pacts with the foulest abominations of the Lower Planes to turn evil against evil. These daring summoners are malconvokers, and they bargain with their lives.

BECOMING A MALCONVOKER

The vast majority of malconvokers are sorcerers and wizards (typically conjurers) who focus on summoning creatures. A few clerics find the class interesting, but most have difficulty accepting the idea of using evil creatures to accomplish good acts.

Entry Requirements

Alignment: Any non-evil.
Skills: Bluff 4 ranks, Knowledge (the planes) 4 ranks.
Languages: Celestial, Infernal.
Feats: Augment Summoning, Spell Focus (conjuration).
Special: Ability to cast *summon monster III*.

CLASS FEATURES

As a malconvoker, you turn the powers of your enemies back upon them, deceiving creatures into opposing those they might typically ally with. Your evil foes are least prepared to deal with the same arsenal of abilities and tactics they employ themselves.

Spellcasting: At each level beyond 1st, you gain new spells per day and an increase in caster level (and spells known, if applicable) as if you had also gained a level in a spellcasting class to which you belonged before adding the prestige class level. You do not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained. If you had more than one spellcasting class before becoming a malconvoker, you must decide to which class to add each level for the purpose of determining spells per day, caster level, and spells known.

Deceptive Summons (Su): At 1st level, you can attempt to trick evil creatures you conjure into serving you for longer than they normally would. When casting a *summon monster* spell to summon an evil-aligned creature, you can attempt a Bluff check as a free action, opposed by the creature's Sense Motive check. If your check succeeds, the duration of the effect is doubled (as if by the Extend Spell feat), and the summoned creature might be subject to additional effects as described below. If it fails, the duration remains as normal and no additional effects can be applied. If you fail the check by 5 or more, the creature breaks free of your control and is hostile toward you (though it still disappears as normal when the spell's duration ends).

If you use this ability when summoning multiple creatures, you must attempt an opposed skill check separately against each creature you wish to affect.

Beginning at 4th level, you can whip the deceived creatures into an infernal fury. If your Bluff check to extend the duration of summoning succeeds, the creatures get a +2 bonus on weapon damage rolls and 2 extra hit points per Hit Die (in addition to the bonuses conferred by Augment Summoning).

Beginning at 7th level, you can instill the deceived creatures with exceptional resistance to your enemies' attempts to control or dismiss them. If your Bluff check to extend the duration of summoning succeeds, the creatures get a +2 bonus on Will saves, and your effective caster level is increased by 2 for the purpose of resisting *dispel magic* and similar effects against those creatures.

Unrestricted Conjuration: For the purpose only of casting conjuration spells, you can ignore any restrictions that forbid you from casting spells of certain alignments. In addition, regular use of conjuration spells with the evil descriptor does not threaten to change your alignment. For example, a good cleric who becomes a malconvoker could cast *summon monster I* to summon a fiendish raven (whose alignment gives the spell the evil descriptor). The cleric could not cast *death knell*, though, which has the evil descriptor but is not of the conjuration school.

Planar Binding: Beginning at 2nd level, you can add the following spells to your class spell list and your list of known spells (or your spellbook) at the indicated levels. If you already have one or more of these spells on your class list at a different level, treat it as being of the lower level.

5th: *lesser planar binding.*

6th: *planar binding.*

8th: *greater planar binding.*

Skill Focus (Bluff): At 3rd level, you gain Skill Focus (Bluff) as a bonus feat. If you already have this feat, you can select any other feat for which you meet the prerequisite.

Fiendish Legion (Ex): Once you attain 5th level, whenever you use a *summon monster* spell to summon one or more evil-aligned creatures, you summon one extra creature of the same kind.

Deceitful Bargaining (Ex): Starting at 6th level, you become exceptionally adept at convincing evil creatures you call that your intentions parallel their own. Upon calling an evil outsider using a *planar binding* spell, you can make a Bluff check opposed by the creature's Sense Motive skill check. If you succeed on this check, the called creature becomes more amenable to your cause, taking a –5 penalty on the opposed Charisma check made to refuse serving you. If you fail, the creature immediately makes a new Will saving throw against your spell. On a failure, the spell functions as normal. If it succeeds on this save, the creature breaks free of your control and can either flee or attack you.

Improved Calling (Su): At 8th level, your understanding of the ways of fiends shows you how to tempt even more powerful beings into your service. The normal HD limit for your *planar ally* and *planar binding* spells (including lesser and greater versions) increases by 2.

Safe Summoning (Ex): At 9th level, you can dismiss any evil creature that you have summoned as an immediate action rather than as a standard action.

PLAYING A MALCONVOKER

You have always honed your conjuration magic beyond that of your other spells, even flirting with the idea of summoning powerful fiends to do your bidding, but you never actually carried through with such a disreputable act. At least, not until that book appeared. Many malconvokers—too many for pure coincidence—were set upon their path by a seemingly serendipitous event: the appearance of a thin folio bound in black scales entitled the *Vital Pact*.

This thesis, written in Celestial, discusses the limited ranks and resources of the extraplanar forces of good as opposed to the endless armies of the Lower Planes. It calls for vague new allies from realms only hinted at but also posits that, for the armies of light to survive, evil must be made to combat itself. Such a philosophical treatise would normally inspire few, were it not for the last page. Each copy of the work bears a name—a truename—handwritten in red ink along with notations to aid in summoning a specific fiend. (See the *Tome of Magic* supplement for more about truename magic.) With the essay's radical ideas fresh in the reader's mind, often echoing similar personal thoughts, the temptation to investigate the darker side of conjuration is usually too strong to resist.

None can say who penned the *Vital Pact*, how the work mysteriously enters the possession of certain spellcasters, and where the unique closing notations come from. Even the fiends first summoned using the text seem wholly ignorant of its contents or how they became involved. Although many malconvokers accept the *Vital Pact* as a boon from some hidden patron or celestial power, some scholars fear a more sinister underlying motive.

Whatever the truth, you have been chosen. Someone or something wanted you to receive a copy of the *Vital Pact* and take up the challenge it proposes, even if you never actually hold the book in your hands. Whether you willingly accept this mandate or seek to discover its source, you cannot deny the effectiveness of its teachings and the good you could put them to.

As you grow in power, your involvement in the planar battle between good and evil also increases. You might begin seeking out places where fiendish influence has leaked into the world, seeking to scour such taints from your home plane. Alternatively, you might travel to other planes, seeking out celestial forces or infiltrating oft-contested infernal battlegrounds such as Acheron, Pazunia on the Abyss's Plain of Infinite Portals, and Hell's first layer, Avernus.

Table 2–10: The Malconvoker **Hit Die: d4**

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spellcasting
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Deceptive summons, unrestricted conjuration	—
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	*Planar binding*	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+3	Skill Focus (Bluff)	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
4th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Deceptive summons (fury)	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
5th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Fiendish legion	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
6th	+3	+2	+2	+5	Deceitful bargaining	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
7th	+3	+2	+2	+5	Deceptive summons (resistance)	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
8th	+4	+2	+2	+6	Improved calling	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
9th	+4	+3	+3	+6	Safe summoning	+1 level of existing spellcasting class

Class Skills (2 + Int modifier per level): Bluff, Concentration, Craft, Disguise, Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (religion), Knowledge (the planes), Profession, Spellcraft.

Combat

As a malconvoker, you rarely fight alone. The versatility of the *summon monster* spells allows you to conjure many allies, whether you are a solitary traveler or part of a group. With enough such spells and your fiendish legion class feature, you can become the general of a small infernal army. Your other powers, although sometimes risky, also ensure that the creatures you summon stay longer and are more powerful than those summoned by your enemies.

Advancement

You come to understand the ways of fiends, honing your words to offer the proper mix of compliments, threats, and promises to whet their infernal desires. As you grow in power, so do the beings you deal with, increasing the forces you can bring to bear but also the risks in bargaining with such corrupt abominations.

Tricking powerful fiends is much more difficult than manipulating lowly minions. Thus, you should max out your Bluff skill to get the most out of your deceptive bargaining; increasing your Charisma score is also important for *planar binding* negotiations. Put ranks into Knowledge (the planes) to learn the strengths and weaknesses of the creatures you summon, so you can choose the best allies for a given situation. Feats that aid your summoning are also helpful, such as Cloudy Conjuration (*Complete Mage*) or *Complete Divine*'s Rapid Spell (which reduces the casting time of your *summon monster* spells to a standard action).

Resources

While advancing as a malconvoker, you continue to strengthen your spellcasting ability, though if you are a divine caster affiliated with a church, your peers might have reservations about your methods. Nevertheless, you might be able to discover and contact other malconvokers (by succeeding on a reasonably difficult Knowledge [arcana] check). These peers welcome the rare fellows they encounter and might be convinced to share their research and even magic items related to summoning. At the very least, together you can plumb the often cryptic passages of the *Vital Pact* to gain further insights into your art.

Illus. by K. Tanner

Argyll Te'Shea, a malconvoker

MALCONVOKERS IN THE WORLD

"I have dwelt in darkness for eighty thousand years, seen the deaths of gods, and feasted on the souls of worlds. I would not be tricked by a mortal wizard."
—Cvol Visok, nalfeshnee dupe

The malconvoker prestige class gives non-evil player characters a chance to use some of the most powerful creatures in the game—and the most dangerous. Malconvokers run terrible risks in attempting to turn pure evil to the service of good. Moreover, they might alienate righteous allies in exchange for tenuous pacts with fiendish servants. The *Vital Pact*, that peculiar text that indoctrinates so many malconvokers, also sets up a dark mystery with possible celestial or infernal ties.

Organization

Nearly all malconvokers have studied the *Vital Pact*, whether or not they possess a copy of the book. Some are fanatics devoted to its radical call to arms, others are researchers hoping to reveal its shadowed origins, and still others are conjurers who seek more versatility in their spellcasting. This shared knowledge puts malconvokers into a strange sort of group, if not an especially organized one. No obvious thread links those who come across that strange text, beyond their affinity for summoning magic.

Malconvokers quietly share their knowledge of extraplanar beings, methods of deceiving those they summon, and, in rare circumstances, the truenames of potent or easily duped fiends. They secretly correspond with one another through mundane letters or spells to protect their own identities and those of their peers, understanding that people in powerful positions abhor their methods. A malconvoker or his agent often leaves a letter in a well-used cache, where another can check for correspondence without drawing attention. Favored spots include statues in crowded public places, especially those with angelic or religious themes.

Every malconvoker risks having his true identity revealed to a fiend he once tricked into his service, which might then track him down and exact horrific retribution. For most, this dreadful prospect never becomes reality. But

when the unthinkable happens, malconvokers can turn only to their peers for help. Some see it as their duty to aid a colleague, but many shun such an individual, terrified of being exposed to the same fate.

NPC Reactions

Malconvokers elicit strong opinions. Authorities within lawful- or good-aligned religions see them as self-deluded demonologists. These critics hold that summoning fundamentally wicked creatures into the world is evil regardless of the end. True, a malconvoker cheats these beings to serve good aims, but two wrongs still don't make a right. Thus, malconvokers have been expelled from religious orders and, in extreme cases, executed as heretics. Followers of other religions, though, welcome malconvokers, primarily those who revere trickster gods and other less lawful deities. They savor the delicious irony of turning demons loose against a cult of demon-worshipers.

Most ordinary folk cannot distinguish malconvokers from other spellcasters and treat them according to their apparent station. Summoning fiends in a public area, however, is likely to produce a hostile reaction. Most people don't care why a spellcaster can so adeptly command demons and devils, only that he does.

MALCONVOKER LORE

Characters with ranks in Knowledge (arcana) can research malconvokers to learn more about them. When a character succeeds on a skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 10: Malconvokers are conjurers who summon demons, devils, and other fiends and trick them into aiding the cause of good.

DC 15: Malconvokers are feared by many, despite their good intentions. The creatures they summon are often more powerful than other summoned monsters of their kind.

DC 20: Many malconvokers begin summoning fiends at the suggestion of a strange book called the *Vital Pact*.

DC 30: Characters who achieve this level of success can learn important details about specific malconvokers in your campaign, including a notable individual, the area in which he operates, and how to contact him.

Contacting a malconvoker depends on his social status and how greatly he fears oppression or pursuit. Correspondence might take place through letters left at prearranged drop points.

MALCONVOKERS IN THE GAME

Malconvokers can fill a number of roles in your campaign. They might be reckless summoners who call on forces they don't fully understand, their judgment clouded by their zeal to combat evil. Particularly power-hungry individuals might wage personal wars against fiends and their influences. More thoughtful, conflicted malconvokers believe in the necessity of sacrificing innocence to gain powerful allies.

Malconvokers make challenging player characters. On the one hand, they can aid their colleagues with their command over terrible creatures. Their research into the truenames of useful or powerful fiends, and their deep knowledge of planar matters, also make them helpful to their comrades. On the other hand, clerics, druids, and paladins often oppose a malconvoker's methods, fearful of not only the dark creatures he controls but also his intentions. Such fear might also mean a malconvoker and his associates are pursued by members of demon-hunting religions or fearful locals.

Adaptation

The origin and purpose of the *Vital Pact* are deliberately left open so that you can create a background appropriate to your campaign. Depending on your taste, the mysterious text can be benevolent, subtly corruptive, or even nonexistent.

If your campaign doesn't focus on cultic tomes and monstrosities of the Lower Planes, you can easily adapt the malconvoker to fulfill more obviously benevolent roles. Change the summoned creatures from evil-aligned to good-aligned to have him command a celestial strike force as powerful as fiends. Doing so also removes the moral and intraparty conflicts members of this class might otherwise face. Alternatively, a malconvoker can summon a different kind of creature in the fight against evil. Such powerful beings can still be dangerous to deal with.

Sample Encounter

Many folk mistake malconvokers for evil spellcasters, and the PCs are no exception. Facing a conjurer aided by fiendish beings, some characters might make a snap judgment and attack someone who is actually on the same side.

EL 12: The PCs have been hired to track down and arrest the leaders of a destructive cult of Hextor. They stalk the dark crusaders, who have a lair in the buried slums beneath the city. There the party finds its prey beset by a chain-wielding kyton eagerly flailing away at the cultists. Behind the chain devil, casting spells into the fray and shouting commands, spins a dark-cloaked figure surrounded by other fiendish creatures. Do the PCs aid those they were sent to capture against what appears to be a greater threat, or do they allow the fiends and their seemingly corrupt master to slaughter their quarry?

Argyll Te'Shea **CR 12**

Male elf cleric 8/malconvoker 4
CG Medium humanoid
Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +4, Spot +4
Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Common, Elven, Infernal

AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15
(+1 Dex, +4 armor, +1 natural)
hp 38 (12 HD)
Immune sleep
Fort +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +15

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee *+1 holy heavy mace* +9/+4 (1d8+2)
Base Atk +8; **Grp** +8
Special Actions deceptive summons (fury), greater turning 1/day, spontaneous casting (cure spells), turn undead 6/day (+5, 2d6+11, 8th)
Combat Gear *potion of resist energy (fire),* scroll of *summon monster VII*
Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 11th):
6th—*blade barrier*[D] (DC 18), *summon monster VI*
5th—*dispel evil*[D] (DC 17; CL 12th), *lesser planar binding* (DC 18), *summon monster V*
4th—*dismissal* (DC 16), *fire shield*[D], *lesser planar ally, summon monster IV*
3rd—*daylight, dispel magic, magic circle against evil*[D] (CL 12th), *searing light* (+9 ranged touch), *summon monster III*
2nd—*aid, align weapon, augury, eagle's splendor, heat metal*[D] (DC 14), *sound burst* (DC 14)
1st—*bless, detect evil, divine favor, magic stone, magic weapon, protection from evil*[D] (CL 12th), *sanctuary* (DC 13)
0—*cure minor wounds, detect magic, guidance, light, purify food and drink, resistance*
D: Domain spell. Deity: Pelor. Domains: Good, Sun.

Abilities Str 10, Dex 13, Con 8, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 17
SQ able to notice secret or concealed doors, strong aura of good, unrestricted conjuration
Feats Augment Summoning, Iron Will, Persuasive, Run, Skill Focus (Bluff)[B], Spell Focus (conjuration)
Skills Bluff +18, Concentration +3, Diplomacy +7, Disguise +8 (+10 acting), Heal +4, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Knowledge (religion) +6, Knowledge (the planes) +6, Listen +4, Search +3, Spellcraft +6, Speak Language (Abyssal, Infernal), Spot +4, Survival +2 (+4 on other planes)
Possessions combat gear plus *+2 leather armor, +1 holy heavy mace, amulet of natural armor +1, cloak of resistance +1, everburning torch, potion of undetectable alignment,* healer's kit, 4 vials of holy water

MASTER OF MASKS

"Every creature is but a role."

—Beriel, Comedian of Calamity and Tragedian of Triumph

Belief and perception shape reality. In worlds where religions derive might from the faith of believers and where amazing magic sways the mind, those who command the senses hold great power. In such an environment, the master of masks takes center stage. Wearer of a thousand faces, with an identity as fluid as that of a crowd of strangers, this thespian of possibilities decides what is real and what can be.

BECOMING A MASTER OF MASKS

A master of masks must be a consummate actor. Anyone capable of shifting from role to role convincingly might enter the prestige class. Many are bards, who are the most obviously talented in the performing arts. Particularly theatrical rogues or those who specialize in disguise also sometimes become masters of masks, as do some multiclass sorcerers or wizards—especially those with a fondness for illusions. Characters of a more martial bent or serious personality usually see acting as frivolous and do not pursue the class.

Entry Requirements

Skill: Bluff 8 ranks, Disguise 8 ranks, Perform (act) 8 ranks.
Languages: Any four.
Special: Must have successfully impersonated an individual, fooling even that person's friends and associates.

CLASS FEATURES

You take on roles as befits your situation. Whether donning the mask of the jester to entertain a crowd or the mask of the gladiator and joining battle, your greatest talent is your versatility.

Spellcasting: At 2nd, 4th, 7th, and 9th level, you gain new spells per day and an increase in caster level (and spells known, if applicable) as if you had also gained a level in a spellcasting class to which you belonged before adding the prestige class level. You do not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained. If you had more than one spellcasting class before becoming a master of masks, you must decide to which class to add each level for the purpose of determining spells per day, caster level, and spells known.

Persona Masks (Su): You gain the ability to craft potent magical masks, each of which allows you to take on a different persona and gain some aspect of that creature or archetypal character. At 1st level, you learn to create and use two masks selected from those described below. At 2nd level, and at every odd-numbered level thereafter, you can create and use one more mask from the list.

Creating a new persona mask requires 8 hours of work and costs 100 gp. You can use only persona masks that you have crafted. No one else (not even another master of masks) can benefit from a persona mask that you create.

To gain the benefit of a mask, you merely wear it. Putting on a mask is a standard action, and removing one is a move action. Once it is worn, the mask's benefit immediately applies. Your master of masks level is your caster level for any spell-like abilities produced by a mask.

In addition to its other benefits, a mask conceals your alignment, replacing it (for the purpose of detection spells or abilities) with an alignment appropriate to the mask. You still retain your normal alignment for all other purposes (such as if a paladin uses smite evil against you).

One or more persona masks can be worn at the same time, occupying the eye lenses/goggles body slot.

Angel: The image of an androgynous face with eyes serenely upturned to the heavens forms this mask, carved from flawless alabaster. Cultic runes adorn the forehead and cheeks, and its edges are ringed by downy feathers.

As an immediate action, you can use *feather fall* as a spell-like ability any number of times per day, but only on yourself.

Once per day as a swift action, you can use *fly* as a spell-like ability; the effect lasts for 5 rounds. As you advance in the master of masks class, you can use this ability more often: twice per day at 4th level, three times per day at 7th level, and four times per day at 10th level.

Your alignment appears to be lawful good while you wear an angel mask.

Archmage: This mask of deep purple fluorite is sculpted in the image of a heavily wrinkled old man. A roughly circular tangle of arcane runes appears where the visage's mouth should be.

You can use each of these spell-like abilities once per day: *charm person*, *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, and *magic missile*. As you advance in the master of masks class, you can use additional spell-like abilities, each once per day: 4th level, *invisibility* and *scorching ray*; 7th level, *lightning bolt* and *slow*; and 10th level, *dimension door* and *ice storm*.

Your caster level is treated as two higher for the purpose of casting arcane spells (up to a maximum of your character level). If you have no arcane spellcasting ability, this effect grants you no benefit.

Your alignment appears to be chaotic good while you wear an archmage mask.

Assassin: Hardened black leather and metal clasps create the disturbing aspect of the assassin. A jagged, cruel slit forms the opening for the mouth, and the mask's edges are worn and stained.

You can deliver a sneak attack that deals an extra 1d6 points of damage when you are flanking an opponent or at any time when the target would be denied its Dexterity bonus (see the rogue class feature, *PH* 50). As you advance in the master of masks class, your sneak attack becomes more devastating: This extra damage improves to 2d6 points at 4th level, 3d6 at 7th level, and 4d6 at 10th level. If you get a sneak attack bonus from another source (such as rogue levels), the bonuses on damage stack.

In addition, you gain a +2 competence bonus on Hide and Move Silently checks. This bonus improves to +4 at 4th level, +6 at 7th level, and +8 at 10th level.

Your alignment appears to be lawful evil while you wear an assassin mask.

Demon: This obsidian mask bears the visage of a darkly handsome fiend. Small, black horns adorn the demon's forehead, and its black ears rise to points. Its smiling mouth shows rows of sharp teeth.

Once per day, you can use *summon monster III* as a spell-like ability, only to summon creatures of chaotic evil alignment. As you advance in the master of masks class, you can summon increasingly powerful creatures: At 4th level, you can instead use *summon monster IV*; at 7th level, *summon monster V*; and at 10th level, *summon monster VI*.

Your alignment appears to be chaotic evil while you wear a demon mask.

Dragon: This multihued mask of precious metals and scintillating gemstones forms the terrible visage of a snarling wyrm. A sunburst of metallic and bejeweled scales flares out around the reptilian face.

Three times per day you can breathe a cone of fire as a standard action. The cone is 30 feet long and deals 2d8 points of fire damage. A successful Reflex save (DC 10 + your master of masks level + your Cha modifier) halves the damage dealt. Once you use this ability, you can't use it again for 1d4 rounds. As you advance in the class, you can deal additional damage with this ability: 4d8 points at 4th level, 6d8 at 7th level, and 10d8 at 10th level.

Your alignment appears to be neutral evil while you wear a dragon mask.

Faceless: Only a pair of empty eyeholes break this otherwise featureless oval, porcelain mask.

You gain a +5 competence bonus on saves against mind-affecting spells and abilities. You are protected from divination effects as if by a *nondetection* spell; the DC of the caster level check is 15 + your master of masks level.

Even if the *nondetection* effect is overcome, your alignment appears to be neutral while you wear a faceless mask.

Gladiator: This wyvern-hide mask is shaped like the face of a grim warrior. Scars cover its surface, and silver chainmail rings surround its outer edge.

You gain proficiency with all martial and exotic weapons. You also gain a +1 competence bonus on attack rolls and weapon damage rolls. As you advance in the master of

Table 2–11: The Master of Masks **Hit Die: d6**

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spellcasting	Masks Known
1st	+0	+0	+2	+2	Persona masks	—	2
2nd	+1	+0	+3	+3	—	+1 level of existing spellcasting class	3
3rd	+1	+1	+3	+3	Mask specialist	—	4
4th	+2	+1	+4	+4	—	+1 level of existing spellcasting class	4
5th	+2	+1	+4	+4	Many faces (2, move)	—	5
6th	+3	+2	+5	+5	Hidden mask	—	5
7th	+3	+2	+5	+5	—	+1 level of existing spellcasting class	6
8th	+4	+2	+6	+6	Many faces (3, swift)	—	6
9th	+4	+3	+6	+6	—	+1 level of existing spellcasting class	7
10th	+5	+3	+7	+7	Many faces (4, immediate)	—	7

Class Skills (4 + Int modifier per level): Appraise, Bluff, Craft, Disguise, Forgery, Perform, Sleight of Hand, Speak Language.

masks class, you become more expert in weapon use: This bonus improves to +2 at 4th level, +3 at 7th level, and +4 at 10th level.

Your alignment appears to be neutral while you wear a gladiator mask.

High Priest: This mask of rose porphyry has a wide mouth open in song, but instead of eyes it has slits twisted into runes (these do not restrict your vision).

You can use each of the following spell-like abilities once per day: *bless, cure light wounds, protection from evil,* and *sanctuary.* As you advance in the class, you can use additional spell-like abilities, each once per day: At 4th level, you can use *aid* and *lesser restoration;* at 7th level, *cure serious wounds* and *remove curse;* and at 10th level, *death ward* and *neutralize poison*.

Your caster level is treated as two higher for the purpose of casting divine spells (up to a maximum of your character level). If you have no divine spellcasting ability, this effect grants you no benefit.

Your alignment appears to be neutral good while you wear a high priest mask.

Jester: Gaudy ribbons, tinkling bells, and a bobbing cockscomb adorn this leather mask. Brightly hued eyeshadow, lipstick, and alternating red, black, and white diamonds flamboyantly paint the form's angular features.

You gain a +2 competence bonus on Balance, Perform, Sleight of Hand, and Tumble checks. As you advance in the master of masks class, you become more proficient with these skills: This bonus improves to +4 at 4th level, +6 at 7th level, and +8 at 10th level.

Your alignment appears to be chaotic neutral while you wear a jester mask.

Lich: This mask is made of poorly cured, purplish skin stretched over yellowed bone. Bloodless cuts and old bruises mar its surface, and tufts of long, white hair sprout from its wrinkled brow.

Once per day you can use *cause fear* and *detect undead* as spell-like abilities. As you advance in the master of masks class, you can use additional spell-like abilities, each once per day: At 4th level, you can use *false life;* at 7th level, *halt undead;* and at 10th level, *fear.*

Additionally, you gain resistance to cold 10.

Your alignment appears to be neutral evil while you wear a lich mask. Furthermore, you register as an undead creature with Hit Dice equal to your character level to any form of magical divination (such as *detect undead*).

Lord: A swirling mixture of gleaming copper and silver forms the regal countenance of a smiling man. A gem-studded diadem adorns its brow, and stamped across its surface are layered images of coins.

Once per day, you can use *remove fear* as a spell-like ability. As you advance in the master of masks class, you can use additional spell-like abilities, each once per day: At 4th level, you can use *eagle's splendor;* at 7th level, *heroism;* and at 10th level, *dispel chaos.*

In addition, you gain a +2 competence bonus on Diplomacy and Gather Information checks. This bonus improves to +4 at 4th level, +6 at 7th level, and +8 at 10th level.

Your alignment appears to be lawful neutral while you wear a lord mask.

Savage: Bright, flaking warpaint streaks this battered wooden image of a snarling, fang-toothed wild man.

Your hands transform into claws, granting you two primary natural weapon attacks, each dealing 1d4 points of damage (assuming you are Medium), plus your Strength modifier. You are considered to be proficient with your natural weapons. Your claws overcome damage reduction as if they were magic weapons.

As you advance in the master of masks class, you can deal more damage with your claws: 1d6 points at 4th level, 1d8 at 7th level, and 2d6 at 10th level.

Your alignment appears to be chaotic neutral while you wear a savage mask.

Mask Specialist (Su): Starting at 3rd level, you innately enhance the abilities of any magic mask you wear (such as the *mask of the skull, DMG* 262). If the mask creates an effect that requires a saving throw, the save DC increases by 2. If the mask grants a bonus on skill checks, that bonus is increased by 2. Otherwise, the mask's caster level is treated as two higher.

This ability has no effect on the persona masks you create and use.

Many Faces (Ex): At 5th level, you can wear more than one persona mask simultaneously. You can use the abilities of only one mask at a time, but you can switch between masks more quickly.

While wearing a persona mask, you can don a second without taking off the first. The appearance and benefit of the second replace those of the first. As a move action, you can have the first mask appear instead, granting its effect in place of the other's.

At 8th level, you can wear up to three masks simultaneously and can switch masks as a swift action.

At 10th level, you can wear up to four masks simultaneously and can switch masks as an immediate action.

While wearing multiple persona masks in this way, you can remove any worn mask as a move action (regardless of which one is active).

Hidden Mask (Su): Beginning at 6th level, you can make any mask you wear become invisible (or return an invisible mask to visibility). Activating or deactivating this ability requires a swift action. The mask's benefit applies regardless of whether it is visible.

PLAYING A MASTER OF MASKS

Your power lies in your talent at manipulating reality through the secret knowledge of those who have come before. You are secure in the perfection of your artistry; masters of masks often adopt grandiose titles. When not in character—a rare occasion—your own personality might

reflect either inner confidence or the aloofness and lack of direction that come from being without a role.

Few others share your consummate skill in the performing arts. Some are teachers, others are rivals, and the rest to you are mere hacks, but all participate in an old and little-understood tradition. This loose guild of like-minded thespians helps you refine your abilities, creating new personas and new powers, though mastery depends on intense practice and personal epiphanies. Nonperformers could never understand how your craft submerges you in a role so completely that the role becomes reality.

Combat

Your role on the battlefield depends on your character background and the masks you have created and mastered. If you prefer stealth, you likely avoid detection behind the faceless mask and don the mask of the assassin to surprise your opponents. On the other hand, if you are a front-line combatant, you might wear the mask of the gladiator or the savage. The masks of the high priest and the lord help you bolster allies, while the mask of the demon brings allies to your side. Those of the archmage and the dragon give you magical offensive power. Your versatility is your greatest strength.

Advancement

You have always been intrigued by the malleability of perceived truth: The most subtle hint, emphasis, or rearrangement of facts can lead others to think and act exactly as you wish. You grew adept at becoming what you weren't, either onstage or in the employ of those who had uses for such a talent. Eventually you discovered the fellowship of like artists who had been sculpting truth for seemingly as long as civilization has existed. You either sought them out yourself or were introduced by another who recognized your talents, and now you perfect the method of the masters of masks.

Since you manipulate belief and perception, you must continue to improve skills related to this expertise, such as Bluff, Disguise, Perform (act), and Sense Motive. Interaction skill tricks (page 82) give you more options to exploit your talents. Your abilities range widely, depending on the masks you've constructed, so you might also take ranks in other skills that work with them. Feat choices likewise should improve your mastery of deception or amplify the benefits of your masks.

Resources

You receive no material aid from others who share your talents, but a measure of professional respect exists among peers dedicated to upholding the secrets of your art. Rather than a formal organization, fellowship in the acting profession is acknowledged among its members. A mentor might have trained you, or you are friendly with other masters of masks. Such allies can help you practice and refine your skills or suggest new masks.

A single rule binds masters of masks: One cannot use his abilities against another. Violation of this principle results in no physical or material penalty, but the offender is forever cut off from his fellows. His ill reputation precedes him throughout the acting community, which can result in financial hardship. Most adhere strictly to this injunction, but in a profession that depends on warping reality, morality is flexible as well, and a few masters of masks pay this warning no heed.

Beriel, a master of masks

MASTERS OF MASKS IN THE WORLD

"How can both an angel and a demon exist in one body?"

—Apatura Iris, critic at the Free City's Grand Theatre

Thieves, spies, truth-benders, and mysterious figures, masters of masks cloak themselves within their roles and hide behind their elegant personas. Those who do not belong to their shrouded and ancient tradition have tremendous difficulty learning anything about their ranks or true powers. Thus, these master impersonators add new layers of intrigue to any campaign, as well as a strange new kind of magic.

Organization

Masters of masks rarely form substantial organizations: Disputes over personal expression and technique, as well as clashes between egos, are barriers to cooperation. Those initiated into the class's secrets acknowledge a loose fellowship defined by their shared abilities. Still, many masters of masks see others as threats, rivals who could reveal their complex subterfuges to further their own ends. Masters

Illus. by R. Gallegos

of masks usually ingratiate themselves with groups of wandering performers, con artists, or adventuring parties that need their duplicitous abilities.

NPC Reactions

Few know that masters of masks even exist, so the average person has no preexisting attitude toward them, even if one declares himself openly. Those who are aware of these truth-shapers treat them as exceptionally skilled actors, or perhaps as spies or assassins, and react accordingly.

Bards usually know of masters of masks and see them as incredibly talented performers. Their admiration borders on awe, so their attitude toward members of this class is typically friendly. Other spellcasters usually treat masters of masks with respect, out of interest in the strange magic these roguish actors possess, and seek interviews and demonstrations at every opportunity. Their attitudes too tend toward friendly, though out of personal interest and curiosity.

Those who hold positions of political or military authority consider masters of masks to be dangerous spies. Any member of a lawful organization or of a secretive group fears and distrusts them, with a starting attitude no better than unfriendly.

MASTER OF MASKS LORE

Characters with ranks in Knowledge (local) can research masters of masks to learn more about them. When a character succeeds on a skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 10: Masters of masks are actors and disguise artists who use masks in their performances and deceptions.

DC 15: Masters of masks are spies just as often as they are entertainers.

DC 20: A master of masks relies on different personas to use a wide repertoire of abilities, including many potent magical effects.

DC 30: Characters who achieve this level of success can learn important details about specific masters of masks in your campaign, including a notable individual and the title he goes by, the area in which he operates, and what masks he wears.

Masters of masks are difficult to find. PCs wishing to make contact might inquire through the criminal underworld or at local playhouses. A master of masks follows up if he is interested, or remains elusive otherwise.

MASTERS OF MASKS IN THE GAME

The master of masks is perfect for players who are not satisfied with just one party role. Since each mask bestows a different ability, the prestige class is as versatile and varied as the player customizes it to be.

As an NPC, a master of masks might be a consummate impersonator who is nearly impossible to pin down, or an expert agent in the employ of rivals.

Adaptation

The master of masks is flexible enough to fit a variety of roles in nearly any campaign setting. One interpretation of the class might have a more sinister nature, with each mask drawing its abilities from trapped outsiders bound within. Masters of masks might be members of an organized group of spies or assassins in the service of an unscrupulous government, arcane organization, or deceptive religion. Alternatively, masters of masks and their signature disguises might be far rarer than suggested above. Perhaps each mask is unique, and a handful of masters compete to find a legendary mask, each hoping to make its powers his alone.

Sample Encounter

PCs might become embroiled in the plots of a master of masks for a variety of reasons, whether allied with him in pursuit of a shared goal, intrigued by his strange magic, or opposing some deception or infiltration.

EL 10: Five years ago Rilvivin Baralstol, son of the infamous crime lord Rosscoul "Clamp" Baralstol, decided to seek his own fortune away from his family's felonious business. A recent heist has put the criminal boss in possession of embarrassing documents that implicate a local noble in some tawdry affair or caper, and now he is extort-

FIRESIDE TALE

"Sit. Sit down and hear my tale. I swear to you it is the honest truth, and Olidammara take my tongue if I stray but a few dozen yards from actual fact.

"It was not long ago that I was a prettier girl—don't snicker, you!—and could work my way into a nobleman's house and go through his cabinets with nothing more than a wink, a smile, and a generously padded corset. Ah, those were the days.

"During my youth I spent as many nights in the arms of noblemen as I could—I did not often sleep alone, I can tell you that! One night, I caught the eye of a particularly wealthy and foolish young lord (how often those traits coincide!). Lured by his ostentatious display of finery, I approached him and sent him into a world of joy with a slight brush of my lips.

"This foolish lad put up nary a struggle as I led him into a place quieter and lonelier than the furious press of the ballroom. As time wore on and he wore down, I coaxed him into gentle sleep before regaining my adornments of the evening. Once more able to endure public scrutiny, I brought with me the silly boy's sword, hidden in the folds and bustles of my now-bulky dress.

"That sword now hangs there, above the fireplace, released from the drudgery of service rendered to such an easily swayed man-child."

ing that prominent citizen. The noble has hired Beriel, an egotistical but incredibly skilled actor, to pose as the newly returned Rilvivin and gain Rosscoul's trust to steal back the documents. The PCs accompany Beriel to complete his disguise as authentic-looking adventuring companions. Beriel's face has never been seen in public, and not even the actor's employer knows whether the master of masks is a male or a female.

Beriel **CR 10**

Human rogue 7/master of masks 3
CG Medium humanoid
Init +6; **Senses** Listen +6, Spot +6
Languages Celestial, Common, Elven, Halfling

AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 15; Dodge, Mobility, uncanny dodge
(+2 Dex, +2 shield, +1 deflection)
hp 38 (10 HD)
Resist evasion
Fort +3, **Ref** +10, **Will** +6

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee *+1 keen dagger* +6 (1d8–1/17–20)
Ranged *+1 keen dagger* +9 (1d8–1/17–20)
Base Atk +6; **Grp** +5
Atk Options sneak attack +4d6
Special Actions persona masks (angel, assassin, lord, jester)
Combat Gear *potion of cat's grace*

Abilities Str 8, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 16
SQ mask specialist, trap sense +2, trapfinding
Feats Deceitful, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Persuasive
Skills Appraise +12, Balance +9, Bluff +18, Climb +5, Diplomacy +14, Disguise +18 (+20 acting), Forgery +7, Gather Information +8, Intimidate +5, Jump +1, Knowledge (local) +14, Listen +6, Open Lock +7, Perform (act) +16, Perform (dance) +5, Perform (oratory) +6, Perform (wind instruments) +5, Search +11, Sense Motive +6, Sleight of Hand +11, Spot +6, Survival +1 (+3 following tracks), Tumble +12, Use Magic Device +8
Possessions combat gear plus *+1 keen dagger, ring of force shield, ring of protection +1, dust of disappearance,* masterwork flute, masterwork thieves' tools, noble's outfit, sunrod, 3 smokesticks

MOUNTEBANK

"The best defense is to never let an enemy see your true self."
—Laughing Cedric, mountebank

Mountebanks are frauds and con artists, capable of slipping into new identities as others change clothing. While they can fit in just about anywhere they go, they are also adept at getting out of tight situations.

BECOMING A MOUNTEBANK

Bards are the most likely to branch into the mountebank prestige class. Their versatile skill selection enables them to meet the class's Knowledge and Spellcraft requirements and to develop other skills. In addition, the bard's spellcasting ability enhances the mountebank's class features.

Table 2–12: The Mountebank **Hit Die: d6**

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+0	+2	+0	Tongue of the devil
2nd	+1	+0	+3	+0	Sneak attack +1d6
3rd	+2	+1	+3	+1	*Alter ego*
4th	+3	+1	+4	+1	Sideslip 1/day
5th	+3	+1	+4	+1	Sneak attack +2d6
6th	+4	+2	+5	+2	*Alter ego,* sideslip 2/day
7th	+5	+2	+5	+2	Slippery mind
8th	+6	+2	+6	+2	Sideslip 3/day, sneak attack +3d6
9th	+6	+3	+6	+3	*Alter ego*
10th	+7	+3	+7	+3	Sideslip 4/day, *sudden escape*

Class Skills (4 + Int modifier per level): Appraise, Bluff, Concentration, Diplomacy, Disguise, Escape Artist, Forgery, Intimidate, Jump, Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (local), Knowledge (psionics), Listen, Sense Motive, Sleight of Hand, Spellcraft, Spot, Tumble.

Rogues, sorcerers, and spellthieves sometimes become mountebanks to improve their battlefield mobility or to enhance existing talents of deception. Spellthief plus mountebank makes an excellent class combination for characters who fight creatures that use spell-like abilities.

Entry Requirements

Alignment: Any nonlawful.
Skills: Bluff 8 ranks, Knowledge (arcana), (local), or (psionics) 4 ranks, Spellcraft 4 ranks.
Feats: Deceitful.

CLASS FEATURES

This prestige class is all about deception in combat. As you advance, you develop sneak attack in addition to enhancing your Bluff skill, which keeps your opponents flat-footed. By the time you reach the apex of the class, you can transport yourself about the battlefield as you please, preventing your opponents from effectively fighting you.

Tongue of the Devil (Ex): Your cunning misdirection leaves others at your mercy. You add your Intelligence bonus (if any) to Bluff checks.

Sneak Attack (Ex): Beginning at 2nd level, you deal an extra 1d6 points of damage when you are flanking an opponent or at any time when the target would be denied its Dexterity bonus. See the rogue class feature, PH 50. The extra damage dealt by your sneak attack increases to 2d6 at 5th level and to 3d6 at 8th level. If you get a sneak attack bonus from another source (such as rogue levels), the bonuses on damage stack.

Alter Ego (Sp): Starting at 3rd level, you establish an alternate identity. This alter ego has its own distinct physical characteristics, quirks, preferred clothing, and so on. At will, you can switch your form between that of your normal identity and that of your *alter ego.* This ability works like the *alter self* spell, except that you can assume only the

appearance of your alternate identity. Your caster level for this ability is equal to your mountebank class level.

As you advance in this prestige class, you develop additional *alter egos*, gaining a new one every three levels beyond 1st (two at 6th and three at 9th).

Sideslip (Su): Beginning at 4th level, you become supernaturally elusive. Once per day as an immediate action, you can transfer yourself from your current space to another up to 20 feet away. This ability otherwise works like the *dimension door* spell, except that you cannot transport other creatures with you. At 6th level, and at every two levels thereafter, you gain an additional daily use of sideslip.

Slippery Mind (Ex): Starting at 7th level, whenever you are affected by an enchantment spell or effect and you fail your saving throw, you can attempt it again 1 round later at the same DC. You get only one extra chance to succeed on your save using this ability.

Sudden Escape (Sp): Beginning at 10th level, you can expend two daily uses of your sideslip ability as a swift action to use *dimension door*, as the spell. Your caster level is equal to your character level.

PLAYING A MOUNTEBANK

Shrewd and quick-witted, you construct numerous false identities to keep your enemies off balance and do whatever it takes to complete your mission. With your ability to assume a flawless disguise and to slip away if the situation sours, you are nearly impossible to pin down. You are confident, irreverent, even insolent.

Combat

You're certainly no front-line fighter, but you have the potential to deal considerable damage against enemies who never see it coming. Your work best with teammates, maneuvering to get flanks and help bring down opponents with your sneak attacks. Use your sideslip ability to pop around the battlefield, slipping in and out to distract opponents while the real heavy hitters in your group mop them up.

Advancement

You were born to become a mountebank. Prior to entering the prestige class, you were probably a ne'er-do-well, a daring rogue and adventurer. The mountebank's deceit and elusiveness let you express yourself fully in the only way you know.

Now you have at least one alternate identity to maintain cover and to put distance between who you really are and how you want others to perceive you. An *alter ego* is especially useful for brokering secret deals with unsavory types, letting you keep "your" hands clean.

As you advance in the class, continue to max out your ranks in Bluff, and invest skill points in Disguise and Sleight of Hand. Ambush feats (page 71) and many feats in the *Complete Adventurer* supplement make the most of your sneak attacks. Improved Feint is an excellent choice with your expertise in Bluff, and Combat Reflexes lets you take advantage of your battlefield repositioning to land unexpected attacks. Deft Strike and Expert Tactician, both from *Complete Adventurer*, are good choices. If you play up the infiltrator aspect of this class, consider magic (or psionic) items that help you cloak your true intentions, such as an *amulet of proof against detection and location*.

Resources

Under your various identities, you could belong to several organizations, taking advantage of the benefits derived from each. You might even join opposing groups, selling information from one side to the other, whether for noble or selfish ends. At heart, though, you are a loner. You exploit an organization only for as long as it offers you some benefit, then abandon it when it ceases to be useful.

MOUNTEBANKS IN THE WORLD

"It's all smiles and pleasantries until a knife ends up in your back."

—Cralbus, high priest of Dispater

A mountebank's chaotic tendencies and ability to mask his appearance enables him to infiltrate cults and other secretive organizations, to learn more about them and ultimately find their weak points. Those who serve the cause of good are invaluable in the fight against evil. On the other hand, wicked mountebanks use their deceptive abilities to spread discord and suffering.

Organization

Mountebanks are not attached to any particular organization. Many operate in several, often contradictory groups, working to bring them down from inside. Good mountebanks infiltrate cults devoted to devils and demons, while evil ones slip inside good-aligned religious organizations, working to dissolve the clergy from within.

NPC Reactions

Since mountebanks develop multiple personalities to move freely within communities, reactions to a given individual depend on the nature of the persona he assumes. Those within an infiltrated group see him as an ally and colleague, and react positively as long as he maintains his cover. If the mountebank's true nature is revealed, he finds less than a warm welcome. People do not like to be deceived, and NPCs who discover they have been fooled by a mountebank are unfriendly or hostile. Indeed, an evil or overzealous organization might kill the unmasked infiltrator.

MOUNTEBANK LORE

Characters with ranks in Knowledge (local) can research mountebanks to learn more about them. When a character succeeds on a skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 10: Mountebanks are con artists and varlets, a thoroughly untrustworthy lot.

DC 15: What separates a mountebank from a common charlatan is his ability to switch personas. A mountebank can have several alter egos.

DC 20: Mountebanks are hard to capture. Not only do they avoid being connected to anything, they also have a knack for slipping out of impossible situations.

Player characters trying to locate a mountebank must succeed on a DC 20 Gather Information check to locate someone who can set up a meeting. It's entirely possible that the contact is the mountebank himself, though he might never reveal his true identity.

MOUNTEBANKS IN THE GAME

Mountebanks can easily fit into an ongoing campaign, since they can pass for anyone—even established NPCs. A long-standing ally could secretly be a mountebank who works against his own or another organization, using the PCs as a source of information. Alternatively, a character whom the PCs regard as a villain might be in fact a double agent who has infiltrated an evil organization.

The mountebank prestige class is a great non-evil alternative to the assassin. It is particularly attractive to players who like versatility and adaptability. In game terms, the prestige class offers a mechanical advantage when interacting with NPCs. In roleplaying terms, the class's toolkit is tailor-made for fighting insidious evil. In a campaign that centers on foiling a dastardly plot, the mountebank gives rogues specialized abilities to fight hidden masterminds.

If a campaign includes a mountebank PC, the DM should provide opportunities for him to use his *alter ego* ability. Perhaps someone he crossed in the past has learned of his true identity, forcing him to spend more and more time in his alternate personas. Challenge the PCs with dangerous plots requiring subterfuge and deception; mountebanks can come up with plans that can get the party in the door without resorting to hack-and-slash combat.

Laughing Cedric, a mountebank

Adaptation

The mountebank class has the strongest appeal to rogues and similar characters with social expertise, but it offers little to spellcasting characters. To make this class appeal to intrigue-loving spellcasters, remove its sneak attack class feature. Instead, the character gains one level of an existing spellcasting class at each level that ordinarily grants sneak attack damage. In this way, he can load up on more enchantment, illusion, and transformation magic to enhance the class's misdirection talents.

Sample Encounter

PCs might encounter a mountebank in one of his many guises.

EL 10: Laughing Cedric is a knave and a cheat. He was always interested in magic and dabbled in spellcasting a bit, but lacked the discipline to make a serious go of it. Instead, he has become adept at snatching spells and magical abilities from those he encounters.

For a while, this tactic worked well. The spells he filched allowed him to further his larcenous nature without having to work hard. One day, he targeted a passing individual whom he took for a wizard. Much to Cedric's surprise, the spell he seized was unfamiliar—and thoroughly evil. Terrified, he released the spell's energy without casting it. The "wizard" fled, disappearing into the streets.

Cedric lay low for a while, hoping his victim would forgive the mistake, but not long afterward strange things started occurring. He was followed by black-robed people wearing queer masks. His rooms were searched, and his friends began to vanish.

Cedric can't report what he has learned to the authorities, since knowledge of his "hobby" could land him in legal trouble. He had to get away quickly, so Cedric invented "Philden Phrent," a minor oil merchant from a nearby city. He wears the merchant's identity in public while he tries to uncover who and what he made the mistake of robbing.

Cedric works at a small stall in the marketplace during the day. So far he has learned that the "wizard" is in fact a cultist of the archdevil Mammon. He needs help to destroy the cult, so he's on the lookout for a group of adventurers to back him up.

Illus. by W. Maby

Laughing Cedric — CR 10

Male half-elf spellthief 5/mountebank 5
CN Medium humanoid (elf)
Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +4, Spot +4
Languages Common, Draconic, Elven, Infernal

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14
(+2 Dex, +2 armor, +2 natural)
hp 38 (10 HD)
Immune sleep
Fort +2, **Ref** +7, **Will** +4 (+6 against enchantments); +1 against spells

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee mwk light mace +8/+3 (1d6+1)
Ranged mwk light crossbow +9 (1d8/19–20)
Base Atk +6; **Grp** +7
Atk Options Combat Expertise, Improved Feint, sneak attack +4d6, steal energy resistance 10, steal spell (2nd, maximum 5 levels), steal spell effect (CL 8th, maximum 5 minutes), steal spell-like ability
Special Actions sideslip 1/day
Spellthief Spells Known (CL 2nd):
1st (1/day)—*shield, silent image* (DC 15)
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th):
At will—*alter ego* (as *alter self,* Philden Phrent only)
4/day—*detect magic*

Abilities Str 12, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 8, Cha 18
SQ trapfinding
Feats Combat Expertise, Deceitful, Improved Feint, Sly Fortune*
*New feat described in Chapter 3
Skills Balance +9, Bluff +19, Concentration +4, Diplomacy +10, Disguise +9 (+11 acting), Escape Artist +7, Forgery +8, Gather Information +6, Hide +7, Intimidate +11, Jump +8, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Listen +4, Move Silently +6, Search +3, Sense Motive +4, Sleight of Hand +9, Spellcraft +8, Spot +4, Tumble +12, Use Magic Device +10, Use Rope +2 (+4 involving bindings)
SQ trapfinding
Possessions masterwork light mace, masterwork light crossbow with 10 bolts, amulet of natural armor +2, bracers of armor +2, cloak of Charisma +2

PSIBOND AGENT

"Now I see you, now I see through you."
—Dieste Karisa, psibond agent

A psibond agent sees through the eyes of others, gently guiding (or in some cases forcefully commanding) her puppet to go places she could never enter herself.

BECOMING A PSIBOND AGENT

Most psibond agents begin as rogues, though a few ninjas and bards also enter the prestige class. Such individuals commonly draw the needed psionic power from the Wild Talent feat, but some psibond agents belong to naturally psionic races (such as the kalashtar from the Eberron campaign setting), and others take some levels in a psionic class, usually lurk or telepath psion.

Entry Requirements

Skills: Gather Information 8 ranks, Sense Motive 4 ranks.
Languages: Any three.
Psionics: Power point reserve of at least 1.
Special: Sneak attack +1d6.

CLASS FEATURES

A psibond agent starts as an effective spy but eventually can influence or even control the minds of others through a powerful telepathic link.

Psibond (Su): As a member of this class, you know how to create a mental link between yourself and a subject. You must be psionically focused to forge the psibond, but afterward you can expend your focus as needed to use other abilities. Establishing a psibond requires a standard action, and an unwilling subject is allowed a Will save (DC 10 + your psibond agent level + your Cha modifier) to resist. Once established, a psibond lasts as long as you concentrate, up to a maximum of 1 minute per class level. The maximum range at which a psibond can be established

LETTER OF REQUEST

To Kolven "the Poet," master of the Forbidden Craft and Creator of Fear:

My boss, Tosey "Sharkarms" Guyver, leader of the Slaughterhouse Guild, extends his greetings and most sincere commendations on your skill. I will not insult you by declaring my name, for I am unimportant.

Only my boss can even approach your greatness. I say "approach," for he knows that you are unequaled in your craft. We know of your exploits to the south—how you eliminated Baron Longacre with a spoon as he supped in a crowded room. That and other accomplishments you have performed leaves my boss greatly moved and deeply impressed. You are truly a singular power in this world, and one worthy of respect from the gods themselves.

While this letter would be justified in simply listing and praising your many inspiring acts, it has a secondary intent, which I shall relate to you now. As you undoubtedly know, artisan as you are of the Forbidden Craft, my organization is in a war against the most damnable foes: the Dead Rabbits gang. These thugs dared attack us without reason on our own turf, killing a number of our companions in cold blood.

For this reason my boss, Tosey Guyver, humbly begs your services in the quiet retirement of the Dead Rabbits' leadership. He hopes you might forgive him this request and the humble and probably insulting gift he has appended to it in the form of a small bag of gems. If you desire another form of recompense, please let it be known, and the Slaughterhouse Guild will extend it to you.

Thank you for your time.

K.H.

is 100 feet, but once in place it persists even if the subject moves out of this range (the psibond is suppressed, but not broken, while the subject is on a different plane). A psibond grants you various options for gathering information or controlling the subject, based on your class level.

Forced Sense Link: At 1st level, you can use a swift action to perceive what the subject perceives using its sight, hearing, taste, or smell. This sense link lasts until you take another swift action to end it, or until the psibond's duration ends. Only one sense is linked, and you cannot switch between senses with the same psibond. You make any skill checks involving senses, such as Spot or Listen, as if you were the subject (using that individual's skill modifiers), and as if you were in the subject's location. You lose your Dexterity bonus to AC while directly sensing what the subject senses. This ability otherwise works like the *forced sense link* power (*Expanded Psionics Handbook* 131).

Nudge: Beginning at 2nd level, you can subtly influence the subject of your psibond. As an immediate action, you can implant a subtle suggestion about which course of action the subject takes if presented with a choice. You cannot communicate any specific action to your subject; you can only nudge it toward a specific choice. For example, if your subject is offered a choice of shifts for the night watch, you can suggest which one to take. No saving throw applies against this effect, but if the suggested action presents any obvious danger to the subject, your nudge fails; the psibond isn't broken. You can't implant the same nonverbal suggestion more than once during the same psibond.

Empathy: At 4th level, you can detect the surface emotions of the subject of your psibond as a free action. You also gain a +2 insight bonus on any Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, or Sense Motive check made against that subject as long as the psibond is in place.

Suggestion: Beginning at 6th level, you can use a swift action to use *suggestion* (as the spell) on the subject of your psibond. The subject is allowed a Will save (DC 13 + your Cha modifier) to resist the effect. You can't use this ability more than once during the same psibond.

Table 2–13: The Psibond Agent Hit Die: d6

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+0	+2	+0	Psibond (forced sense link)
2nd	+1	+0	+3	+0	Psibond (nudge)
3rd	+2	+1	+3	+1	Sneak attack +1d6
4th	+3	+1	+4	+1	Psibond (empathy)
5th	+3	+1	+4	+1	Lingering psibond
6th	+4	+2	+5	+2	Psibond (suggestion), sneak attack +2d6
7th	+5	+2	+5	+2	Double psibond
8th	+6	+2	+6	+2	Psibond (false sensory input)
9th	+6	+3	+6	+3	Sneak attack +3d6
10th	+7	+3	+7	+3	Psibond (dominate)

Class Skills (6 + Int modifier per level): Appraise, Balance, Bluff, Climb, Concentration, Craft, Decipher Script, Diplomacy, Disable Device, Disguise, Escape Artist, Forgery, Gather Information, Hide, Intimidate, Jump, Knowledge (local), Listen, Move Silently, Open Lock, Perform, Profession, Search, Sense Motive, Sleight of Hand, Speak Language, Spot, Swim, Tumble, Use Psionic Device, Use Rope.

False Sensory Input: At 8th level, you gain a limited ability to falsify one of the senses of your psibond's subject. This requires a swift action to activate or maintain each round, and otherwise works like the *false sensory input* power (*Expanded Psionics Handbook* 106), though no save is allowed.

Dominate: At 10th level, you gain the ability to fully control the subject of your psibond. This works like the *dominate monster* spell (*PH* 224) and requires a standard action to activate. The subject is allowed a Will save (DC 19 + your Cha modifier) to resist the effect. If you successfully dominate the subject, the effect lasts for 1 hour. Using this ability automatically ends your psibond with the subject, regardless of whether it succeeds on the save.

Sneak Attack (Ex): Beginning at 3rd level, you deal an extra 1d6 points of damage when flanking an opponent or any time the target would be denied its Dexterity bonus. See the rogue class feature, *PH* 50. The extra damage dealt

GETTING AHEAD

To the cleric of Olidammara, head of the Dead Rabbits gang:

You will find in the box that accompanies this note a particularly gruesome but I trust nonetheless inspiring gift. I present it to you in good faith not as a threat, but as a way of showing my thanks for a previous act of beneficence you once showed me but have probably by now forgotten.

When I was a child, you came to my village for reasons that are your own. There you acted as a merchant selling your wares, but it was whispered that you were in fact a priest in the service of the Laughing Rogue. At the time, I suffered in terrible illness and pain, and my destitute and heartbroken mother (may the gods grant her soul peace) came to you begging for aid. She had no coin to offer and was not as comely as the fair maidens to whom you usually gave your gentle ministrations. Despite all that, you cured me of my illness and complimented my mother on her nonexistent beauty. For that, she died praising you and Olidammara.

Though I never learned your name, I have not forgotten your kindness. In repayment I offer to you the head of a rival who sought me out to do unto you what I have done unto him. I believe the Slaughterhouse Guild these days lives up to its name.

My debt to you is repaid, yet know that no amount of gold will ever bring me to darken your doorstep in threat.

Kolven "the Poet"

Illus. by M. Coimbra

Dieste Karisa, a psibond agent

increases to 2d6 at 6th level and to 3d6 at 9th level. If you get a sneak attack bonus from another source (such as rogue levels), the bonuses on damage stack.

Lingering Psibond (Su): When you attain 5th level, your psibond becomes more powerful. Your psibond remains in place for 1 round after you cease concentrating. If you resume concentration in the next round, you retain the psibond's effect as if you had never stopped concentrating.

Double Psibond (Su): At 7th level, you learn the secret of maintaining two psibonds simultaneously. Each psibond must be established separately against a different subject, but your concentration maintains both links equally well. Using any special abilities through the links must be done separately (for example, establishing a forced sense link requires a separate swift action for each subject).

PLAYING A PSIBOND AGENT

Others exist to be your pawns. Strangers (and sometimes acquaintances) serve best as puppets through whom you can observe and manipulate the world. Even friends—if you have any—might benefit from the occasional nudge. Take care, however, not to use your abilities on your traveling companions too often, lest they lose their trust and leave you helpless.

Although you work well on your own and make no apologies for your actions, you appreciate the company of psions and rogues and tolerate the presence of others. Indeed, exploiting the skills of your companions keeps you protected in dangerous situations.

Combat

You serve two distinct roles in combat. You gather information before the actual outbreak of conflict, and in the early rounds of battle you try to manipulate your pawn into a position that is advantageous to you and your comrades. Once you have set up the battle to your liking, you try to deliver your sneak attack, as any rogue would.

Advancement

You've needed to take control from an early age. In your youth, you tried to manipulate friends into giving you gifts or acceding to your wishes. As you matured, your manipulations grew more deft, and you learned to tap more deeply into your psionic abilities.

You excel in subtly taking charge of a situation. As you advance in this prestige class, focus on enhancing the talents that make you most effective. Add ranks to Bluff, Hide, and Move Silently to help you get out of trouble should your psibond fail you. Consider picking up a psionic feat or two, such as Psionic Weapon or Speed of Thought (both from *Expanded Psionics Handbook*), to enhance your combat prowess. The new ambush feats in Chapter 3 also provide a variety of interesting twists on your normal sneak attack, especially Mind Drain for dealing with other psionic characters.

Resources

Outside of your very small circle of adventuring companions, you belong to no organization. In times of need, you can acquire resources from your pawns, although you rarely do so. You are self-sufficient and independent: Receiving aid from someone, even if you know it was not his own idea, gives him power over you.

PSIBOND AGENTS IN THE WORLD

"I don't know how she knew that. It's almost as if she was listening to my conversation."

—Argus Coopson, bewildered pawn

Consummate loners and master manipulators, psibond agents fit smoothly into any campaign that includes psion-

ics. You can easily introduce a psibond agent as the power behind the throne: a trusted advisor who actually controls a tribe, city, or nation through her puppet. Less sinister examples include a mysterious wanderer who always seems to get the best of any situation, a quiet tavern regular who receives every meal on the house, or an obnoxious tagalong who always seems to know what you're up to.

Organization

Psibond agents do not form organizations and chafe at the notion of joining them, confident in their own abilities and the exploitation of others'. A psibond agent whose talents are known, even to only a few, is inundated with requests to join guilds, schools, or conclaves competing to put her talents to use. She acquiesces to such offers only to gain control of an organization through direct manipulation of its leaders, even as they believe she serves them.

NPC Reactions

Most people never realize they have met a psibond agent, nor do they know that they have been manipulated by one (even if they take actions that are out of character). Nobody likes to be controlled, so when a psibond agent is revealed she can expect violent hostility, regardless of whether she actually used her abilities on the people who uncover her. More enlightened and experienced members of society temper their fear with reason, but they are still unfriendly toward a known psibond agent. Other psionic characters (especially telepaths) treat a psibond agent with indifference, seeing her abilities as no more dangerous than their own. Only members of the criminal underground and those who wish to exploit her talents extend a friendly greeting—even if it is feigned.

PSIBOND AGENT LORE

Characters with ranks in Knowledge (psionics) can research psibond agents to learn more about them. When a character succeeds on a skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 10: Psibond agents combine psychic powers with stealth and secrecy.

DC 15: Psibond agents can hear what you hear and see what you see.

DC 20: Psibond agents can manipulate you with suggestions and hints. The most powerful ones can actually control your body.

DC 30: Characters who achieve this level of success can learn important details about specific psibond agents in your campaign, including a notable individual, the area in which she operates, and the kinds of activities she undertakes.

As a rule, psibond agents don't want to be found. Uncovering one requires following up on rumors of people acting strangely, as well as a successful Gather Information check (DC 20 + target's psibond agent level).

PSIBOND AGENTS IN THE GAME

Since psibond agents are independent operators, introducing them does not require adding a new organization to your campaign or even a new character archetype. In a campaign featuring psionics, telepaths already manipulate the minds of others; the psibond agent merely adds some of those abilities to a rogue. Psibond agents could form an extremist faction of mind-controlling telepaths or work to hunt other psionic characters.

Players who enjoy the role of the mysterious loner or who like taking control should enjoy playing psibond agents. Telepaths, obviously, are drawn to the prestige class, as are psionic characters who seek new ways to attacking other psionics-using creatures. Such independent characters can clash with a party's group goals, however, so be sure to provide opportunities to encourage cooperation.

Adaptation

If your campaign doesn't include psionics, you can readily adapt this prestige class to arcane magic. A group of enchanters can easily take the role of psibond agents, which requires only replacing the power point requirement with the ability to cast 1st-level arcane spells.

Sample Encounter

Encountering a psibond agent is often not obvious. The PCs might "meet" one watching them through the eyes of another person, never knowing of her presence. Alternatively, they might come across a psibond agent whose thoughts are literally elsewhere, making her unaware of her surroundings. Usually, PCs knowingly come into contact with a psibond agent only when she instigates the meeting.

EL 12: Dieste Karisa has a childlike sense of right and wrong. During the day, she is dull and sleepy, barely holding onto her job in a small bookstore. At night, Dieste watches. When she sees something she doesn't like, she makes it stop. The PCs might stumble onto her directly or indirectly while she is watching, or they might find her in the middle of psychic battle, punishing those who prey on the weak and powerless. Whether they aid her or her opponent depends on the situation and their own ideas about vigilante justice.

Dieste Karisa **CR 12**

Female half-elf psion (telepath) 5/spellthief 1/psibond agent 6
NG Medium humanoid (elf)
Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +11, Spot +11
Languages Common, Abyssal, Aquan, Auran, Celestial, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Giant, Gnoll, Gnome, Goblin, Ignan, Infernal, Orc, Sylvan, Terran, Undercommon

AC 13, touch 12, flat-footed 11
(+2 Dex, +1 natural)
hp 50 (12 HD)
Immune sleep
Fort +4, **Ref** +8, **Will** +8 (+10 against enchantments)

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee mwk dagger +6/+1 (1d4–1/19–20)
Ranged mwk dagger +9 (1d4–1/19–20)
Base Atk +6; **Grp** +5
Atk Options sneak attack +3d6, steal power points (1), steal spell (1st, maximum 1 levels)
Special Actions psibond (empathy, forced sense link, nudge, suggestion)
Combat Gear *dorje of force screen**
*Item described in *Expanded Psionics Handbook*
Power Points/Day: 44; **Powers Known*** (ML 5th; 1d20+9 to overcome psionic resistance):
3rd—*dispel psionics, hostile empathic transfer* (DC 20), *psionic blast* (DC 20)
2nd—*brain lock* (DC 19), *ego whip* (DC 19), *read thoughts* (DC 19)
1st—*far hand, force screen, inertial armor, mindlink* (DC 18), *psionic charm* (DC 18)
*Powers described in *Expanded Psionics Handbook*

Abilities Str 8, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 22, Wis 10, Cha 13
SQ lingering psibond, trapfinding
Feats Combat Manifestation*, Power Penetration*, Psionic Talent* [3], Psithief**
*Feats described in *Expanded Psionics Handbook*
**New feat described in Chapter 3
Skills Bluff +16, Concentration +16, Diplomacy +7, Disguise +1 (+3 acting), Gather Information +18, Intimidate +12, Knowledge (psionics) +16, Listen +11, Psicraft +16, Search +7, Sense Motive +12, Speak Language (10), Spot +11
Possessions combat gear plus masterwork dagger, *amulet of natural armor +1, headband of intellect +4, psionatrix of telepathy**
*Item described in *Expanded Psionics Handbook*

Psibond (Su) Duration 6 minutes; Will DC 17 negates. Against the *suggestion* effect, Will DC 14 resists.

SPELLWARP SNIPER

"Oppose me, and I shall show you whole new universes of pain."

—Tessa Senchan, master spellwarp sniper

The spellwarp sniper contorts spells, changing area effects into rays that deliver precise, devastating attacks.

BECOMING A SPELLWARP SNIPER

Every spellwarp sniper has at least one level of rogue, ninja, spellthief, or some other class that grants the sneak attack or sudden strike class feature, which is a prerequisite for the prestige class. At her heart, however, a spellwarp sniper is a spellcaster of respectable skill, usually of arcane origin. Occasionally a divine caster (such as a cleric dedicated to a deity of destruction) enters this class.

Entry Requirements

Skills: Concentration 8 ranks, Spellcraft 8 ranks.
Feat: Point Blank Shot.
Spellcasting: Ability to cast 3rd-level spells.
Special: Sneak attack or sudden strike +1d6.

CLASS FEATURES

A spellwarp sniper can alter the way certain spells work, turning them into precision weapons that target vital locations.

Spellcasting: At each level, you gain new spells per day and an increase in caster level (and spells known, if applicable) as if you had also gained a level in a spellcasting class to which you belonged before adding the prestige class level. You do not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained. If you had more than one spellcasting class before becoming a spellwarp sniper, you must decide to which class to add each level for the purpose of determining spells per day, caster level, and spells known.

Spellwarp (Ex): You can alter the form of certain area spells into rays as you cast them. As a free action, you can warp a 1st-level area spell with instantaneous duration and a range greater than touch. The spell's level, components, range, and damage (if any) remain unchanged. However, the spell's area entry is replaced by an effect entry of "ray."

The spell acts in all ways as a ray, and is considered a ray for the purpose of effects that modify or depend on rays (such as the other abilities of this prestige class). You must succeed on a ranged touch attack to affect an opponent with the spell. Even if the original spell allowed a Reflex save to reduce or negate its effect, the ray does not. However, if the original spell allowed a Fortitude or Will save to reduce or negate the spell's effect, the save still applies.

You must decide to warp the spell as you cast it. You do not need to prepare it as a warped spell. You can apply metamagic feats as normal to the spell, as long as they can affect ray spells.

Each time you advance a level in this class, the maximum level of spell that you can affect increases by one. For example, a 3rd-level spellwarp sniper can warp spells of up to 3rd level.

Sudden Raystrike (Ex): If you can catch an opponent when he is unable to defend himself effectively from your ray attack, you can strike a vital spot for extra damage. Whenever the target of one of your ray spells is denied a Dexterity bonus to AC (whether the target actually has a Dexterity bonus of not), you deal an extra 1d6 points of damage with your ray spell. (If your ray spell doesn't deal hit point damage, this extra damage doesn't apply.) At 4th level, the extra damage increases to 2d6. If you get a sneak attack or sudden strike bonus from another source (such as rogue or ninja levels), the bonuses on damage stack whenever both abilities would apply to the same target.

This damage applies only to targets within 30 feet. Creatures with concealment, creatures without discernible anatomies, and creatures immune to extra damage from critical hits are all immune to your sudden raystrikes.

Precise Shot: At 3rd level, you gain Precise Shot as a bonus feat. If you already have Precise Shot, you can select any other feat that has Point Blank Shot as a prerequisite, as long as you meet the prerequisite for the chosen feat.

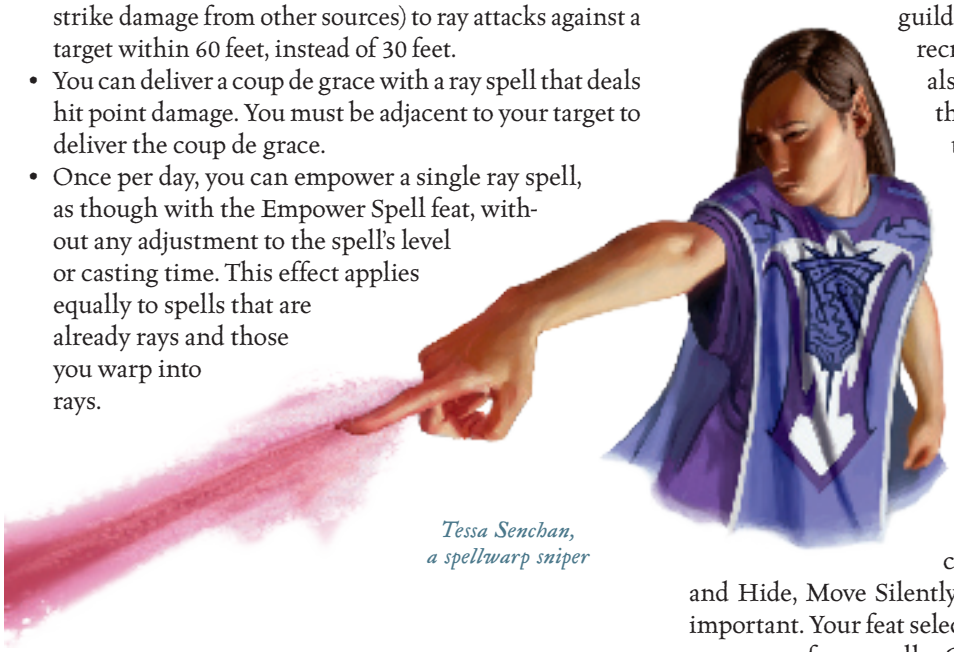
Table 2–14: The Spellwarp Sniper Hit Die: d6

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spellcasting
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Spellwarp	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	Sudden raystrike +1d6	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
3rd	+2	+1	+1	+3	Precise Shot	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
4th	+3	+1	+1	+4	Sudden raystrike +2d6	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
5th	+3	+1	+1	+4	Ray mastery	+1 level of existing spellcasting class

Class Skills (4 + Int modifier per level): Concentration, Craft, Hide, Intimidate, Knowledge (arcana), Move Silently, Profession, Spellcraft, Spot.

Ray Mastery (Ex): At 5th level, you attain unequaled control over your ray spells. This control manifests in three ways.

- You can apply the extra damage from the sudden raystrike ability (as well as any additional sneak attack or sudden strike damage from other sources) to ray attacks against a target within 60 feet, instead of 30 feet.
- You can deliver a coup de grace with a ray spell that deals hit point damage. You must be adjacent to your target to deliver the coup de grace.
- Once per day, you can empower a single ray spell, as though with the Empower Spell feat, without any adjustment to the spell's level or casting time. This effect applies equally to spells that are already rays and those you warp into rays.



Tessa Senchan, a spellwarp sniper

PLAYING A SPELLWARP SNIPER

You value precision and control. Not comfortable with the flashy and clumsy style of most destructive spells, you have learned to focus them into tight, manageable beams. This desire for exacting detail colors every aspect of your life, from your dealings with others to your personal work ethic. You do not speak in generalizations, preferring specific facts. Until experience teaches you better, you take information, people, and events at face value.

Combat

You excel at fighting isolated creatures, focusing your attention and your precise spellcasting on one target at a time. When faced with a group of foes, though, you are less effective. Although you can cast area spells, they lack your specialized destructive power when not in ray form. For this reason you should focus on a single foe in an opposing group, preferably one that seems not particularly agile.

Advancement

You likely learned your trade from a mentor, also a spellwarp sniper, whose attention was drawn by your discipline and focus. You were encouraged by your mentor to join an organization that befits your morals and beliefs. Some guilds and other magical organizations recruit precise, dedicated individuals who show promise, whether they run in street gangs or walk the grandest halls of wizardry. The best candidate is someone already devoted to the study of magic who can then learn the ways of trickery and stealth; such individuals are easier to find than pocket-picking street urchins with the potential to wield magic.

Once you become a spellwarp sniper, you must maintain your discipline and focus. Concentration and Spellcraft remain vital skills for you, and Hide, Move Silently, and Spot become increasingly important. Your feat selection should continue to support your use of ray spells: Good choices include Improved Precise Shot, and Split Ray and Ranged Spell Specialization (both from *Complete Arcane*). Weapon Focus (ray) is an acceptable choice, though since rays require only ranged touch attacks to hit, the additional accuracy might not be necessary. Reach Spell (*Complete Divine*) might also be a good choice, depending on your available array of touch spells.

Resources

Most spellwarp snipers belong to some kind of organization. If you do not already, you are likely to endure continual recruitment offers. When you are attached to an organization, you can expect to find support both from the leaders of the group and from those with whom you actively serve. Such support includes training and any needed supplies for your studies. Snipers are invaluable to a team, and you make one of the best. In turn, you are expected to aid your colleagues within the organization, typically by joining teams that require fire support.

Illus. by E. Deschamps

SPELLWARP SNIPERS IN THE WORLD

"We figured we could take 'em. We got the jump on those guards in the square, but then the fire started shootin' into us. Beams o' fire like flaming yellow needles. I don't know where they were coming from, and I didn't wait around long enough to find out!"

—Stecky "the Clutch" Rockwater, Red Knives Gang

Since spellwarp snipers usually belong to organizations, you can readily introduce one into your campaign through a group affiliated with the PCs.

Organization

A spellwarp sniper is particularly effective in the role of ranged support, having greater accuracy than others who rely on traditional weapons. Assassins' guilds and thieves' guilds openly welcome spellwarp snipers. City and royal guards also actively recruit them. In addition, organizations that focus on the study of magic recruit spellwarp snipers for their surgical precision. The ability to hone devastating evocations into pinpoint attacks greatly reduces the chance of accidental damage to the surroundings, especially in libraries and universities.

Sometimes a spellwarp sniper occupies a different role, that of executioner. A spellwarped *fireball* ray to the back of the head is more deadly than a crossbow bolt and sends a more terrifying message.

NPC Reactions

Popular among allies, respected by rivals, and feared by enemies, spellwarp snipers elicit a wide range of reactions from those they meet. Those fighting on the same side as one are typically friendly, welcoming such a powerful ally. Spellwarp snipers acknowledge one another as belonging to an elite group of spellcasters, but they tread carefully among their own kind. Overall, they are indifferent toward one another. Those who have suffered at the hands of a spellwarp sniper offer no quarter and begin as openly hostile.

SPELLWARP SNIPER LORE

Characters with ranks in the appropriate Knowledge skill (arcana for arcane casters or religion for divine casters) can research spellwarp snipers to learn more about them. When a character succeeds on a skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 10: A spellwarp sniper can hit a vital spot with a spell just as a rogue can with a crossbow bolt, and usually far more accurately.

DC 15: Spellwarp snipers can manipulate area spells to make them into precise beams of destructive magic.

DC 20: If you see someone who looks like a spellcaster watching you intently, take cover. She's probably looking for just the right time to blast you with a ray.

DC 30: Characters who achieve this level of success can learn important details about specific spellwarp snipers in your campaign, including a notable individual, the area in which she operates, and the kinds of activities she undertakes.

A PC who wishes to enter this prestige class usually seeks out a mentor. The easiest method is to contact an organization with which the character is friendly: a thieves' guild, the city or royal guard, a temple, or a wizard's university, depending on the PC's affiliations.

SPELLWARP SNIPERS IN THE GAME

Spellwarp snipers can bring great power to bear in a small space. At lower levels they serve as magical assassins or sharpshooters, particularly as part of an ambush or group raid. Higher-level spellwarp snipers make effective leaders, particularly if they command a number of other spellwarp snipers. At any level, they are interesting and surprising spellcasting opponents.

The prestige class appeals to evokers for obvious reasons. Players who like the role of long-ranged support combatant or who prefer characters with precision-based attacks should enjoy the change of pace offered by the spellwarp sniper.

Adaptation

As a prestige class, the spellwarp sniper is already fairly generic in the way it interacts with a campaign setting. It doesn't require new rules or different sources of power. For an interesting take on spellwarp snipers, try changing the types of spells they can warp. Perhaps they can transform touch spells rather than area spells, or they focus their abilities only on nondamaging area spells. Depending on the needs of your campaign, you might change the class's role in a group, or create a separate organization of spellwarp snipers that is not affiliated with another group.

Sample Encounter

A spellwarp sniper might appear wherever the PCs could encounter an assassin or a mundane sniper. Characters might stumble onto one intently watching a distant battle, occasionally casting an unfamiliar ray spell into the fray. They might also come across one in close quarters, finishing or preparing for an assassination.

EL 12: Tessa Senchan works for the royal guard, supporting the front-line combatants. While her comrades cross swords with the city's worst, she stays hidden at a distance, blasting thugs and murderers with her pinpoint-accurate spells. The PCs might meet Tessa if they accept employment with the guard and work with her on an operation. If they walk on the other side of the law, the PCs might become targets of Tessa's deadly beams. If they stumble across her position, or trace her spells back to her, they must deal with several lower-level guards protecting her.

A party that is uninvolved in the law of the city (whether upholding it or breaking it) might cross paths with Tessa while she's on her way to her next assignment, incurring neither a friendly nor a hostile response.

Tessa Senchan **CR 12**

Female half-elf rogue 1/wizard 6/spellwarp sniper 5
LN Medium humanoid (elf)
Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +8, Spot +12 (+15 in shadow)
Languages Common, Celestial, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Halfling, Infernal, Undercommon, empathic link

AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 13
(+2 Dex, +1 deflection, +2 natural)
hp 50 (12 HD)
Immune sleep
Fort +4, **Ref** +7, **Will** +10

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee mwk quarterstaff +6/+1 (1d6–1)
Ranged ray spells +9 touch
Base Atk +6; **Grp** +5
Atk Options Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Enlarge Spell, Empower Spell, sneak attack +1d6, spellwarp (maximum 5th), sudden raystrike +2d6
Special Actions ray mastery
Combat Gear 3 *potions of cure light wounds*
Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 11th; 1d20+13 to overcome SR):
6th—*disintegrate* (DC 22), *repulsion* (DC 22)
5th—*baleful polymorph* (DC 21), *cone of cold* (DC 22), *empowered fireball* (DC 20)
4th—*dimension door,* empowered *scorching ray, ice storm* (2) (DC 21)
3rd—*dispel magic, fly, fireball* (2) (DC 20), *ray of exhaustion*
2nd—enlarged *ray of enfeeblement, invisibility, scorching ray* (3), *web* (DC 18)
1st—*mage armor* (2), *protection from evil, magic missile, ray of enfeeblement, shield*
0—*mage hand, prestidigitation, ray of frost* (2)

Abilities Str 8, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 22, Wis 12, Cha 10
SQ familiar, share spells, trapfinding
Feats Alertness[B] (if familiar within 5 ft.), Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot[B], Enlarge Spell[B], Empower Spell, Scribe Scroll[B], Spell Focus (evocation), Spell Penetration, Weapon Focus (ray)
Skills Concentration +16, Decipher Script +16, Diplomacy +2, Gather Information +6, Hide +12, Knowledge (arcana) +21, Knowledge (local) +16, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +7, Knowledge (religion) +20, Knowledge (the planes) +7, Listen +8, Search +7, Spellcraft +21, Spot +12 (+15 in shadow)
Possessions combat gear plus masterwork quarterstaff, *amulet of natural armor +2, ring of protection +1, brooch of shielding, headband of intellect +4,* spellbook
Spellbook spells prepared plus 0—all; 1st—*protection from chaos, true strike;* 2nd—*glitterdust;* 4th—*bestow curse, remove curse;* 5th—*wall of force, wall of stone*

Holand, Owl Familiar **CR —**

NE Tiny magical beast (augmented animal)
Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +14, Spot +6 (+14 in shadows)
Languages empathic link, speak with master

AC 20, touch 15, flat-footed 17
(+2 size, +3 Dex, +5 natural)
hp 25 (6 HD)
Resist improved evasion
Fort +3, **Ref** +8, **Will** +11

Speed 10 ft. (2 squares), fly 40 ft. (average)
Melee talons +11 (1d4–3)
Space 2-1/2 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.
Base Atk +6; **Grp** –5
Atk Options deliver touch spells

Abilities Str 4, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 8, Wis 14, Cha 4
Feats Weapon Finesse
Skills Concentration +15, Hide +21, Listen +14, Move Silently +17, Search +0, Spot +6 (+14 in shadows)

UNCANNY TRICKSTER

"If you liked that, just wait'll you see what's next!"
—Ameslan Trag, uncanny trickster

The uncanny trickster combines the features of his primary class with a wider range of skill tricks than any other character can achieve.

BECOMING AN UNCANNY TRICKSTER

Because of the simple requirements for entry, the uncanny trickster appeals to a wide range of characters. Rogues, bards, rangers, and other skill-focused characters are the most likely to enter the prestige class, but the entry requirements are well within the reach of intelligent members of any class. Pure spellcasters prefer the magical trickster prestige class (page 45), while warriors find the battle trickster (page 28) more to their liking.

Entry Requirements

Skills: Any four skills 8 ranks each.
Skill Tricks: Any four.

CLASS FEATURES

The uncanny trickster excels at using skill tricks. He can use more tricks than any other character.

Class Features: At each level after 1st, you gain class features (including spellcasting ability) and an increase in effective level as if you had also gained a level in a class to which you belonged before adding the prestige class level. You do not, however, gain the benefit of your previous class's Hit Dice, attack progression, skill points, or saving throws. If you had more than one class before becoming an uncanny trickster, you must decide to which class to add each level for the purpose of determining class features.

Bonus Trick (Ex): At each level, you gain a bonus skill trick for which you meet the prerequisite. These bonus tricks do not cost skill points and do not count against your maximum number of skill tricks available.

Favorite Trick (Ex): You have a limited repertoire of signature stunts. At each level, choose one skill trick you know that you can perform only once per encounter. You can now use that trick one additional time per encounter. You can't choose the same skill trick more than once.

Tricky Defense (Ex): At 3rd level, you have mastered incorporating tricks into your personal defenses. In any round when you perform a skill trick, you gain a +1 competence bonus on saving throws until the start of your next turn.

Table 2–15: The Uncanny Trickster **Hit Die: d6**

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Class Features
1st	+0	+0	+2	+0	Bonus trick, favorite trick	—
2nd	+1	+0	+3	+0	Bonus trick, favorite trick	+1 level of existing class features
3rd	+2	+1	+3	+1	Bonus trick, favorite trick, tricky defense	+1 level of existing class features

Class Skills (8 + Int modifier per level): Appraise, Balance, Bluff, Climb, Craft, Decipher Script, Diplomacy, Disable Device, Disguise, Escape Artist, Forgery, Gather Information, Hide, Intimidate, Jump, Listen, Move Silently, Open Lock, Perform, Profession, Search, Sense Motive, Sleight of Hand, Spot, Swim, Tumble, Use Magic Device, Use Rope.

PLAYING AN UNCANNY TRICKSTER

You know more tricks than anyone else, and you can use your tricks more frequently. Many scoundrels use tricks to augment their other abilities, but you take the opposite outlook: You rely on your tricks and use your other abilities in support of them.

You work well with others, especially those who can perform skill tricks or have abilities that emulate tricks. Becoming a trick expert instantly affiliates you with a very loose fellowship of tricksters (battle, magical, and uncanny). You don't get along with every trickster you meet, though: Some jealously guard their secrets and view others of their kind as rivals.

Combat

"Full of surprises" best describes your fighting style. You enter combat cautiously, setting the tone of your contribution. While the fighters slug it out and the casters stay in the back slinging spells, you move around unpredictably, always looking for an opportunity to deliver a sudden finishing blow.

If you prefer fighting from range, use movement tricks to get yourself somewhere safe on the battlefield, as far from the main engagement as possible. From this more secure vantage point, you can use your ranged attacks (including appropriate skill tricks) to support your allies.

Advancement

Becoming an uncanny trickster requires hard work and sacrifice. While others devote their training to learning only skills, you seek a balance between skills and tricks. You need to invest in skills, since you need a minimum level of competence in a skill before attempting new and spectacular applications of it, but you devote as many skill points as you can to tricks. Thus, you know many skills but have mastered few (if any).

Interaction and mental tricks can be very useful in combat, but you should focus on movement tricks to get yourself safely around the battlefield. The prestige class offers both plentiful skill points and more bonus skill tricks than any other, so buy as many tricks as you can afford. Maximize your potential by picking up feats that grant bonus skill tricks as well (see Chapter 3).

Resources

Although you might not have realized it when you became an uncanny trickster, you are part of a larger (albeit very loosely organized) group. The benefits and requirements of this group are few, but it does offer the camaraderie of shared experiences as well as the chance to learn new tricks. Nevertheless, tricksters owe no more to one another than do any other people with similar, nonbinding interests.

THE CLERIC AND THE CON

Ambersmill, 714 CY

The setting sun cast a hellish glow over the abandoned hamlet of Ambersmill, its red light turning fields of tobacco and devilweed to seas of blood.

Or at least, that's how it seemed to the shaky acolyte of Pelor.

In reality, the dusk warmly illuminated a peaceful, ordinary-looking farm village. The chill breeze of the coming night blew through still-open windows, the whistle of its passage the only noise.

"So where are the devils?" Essan whispered, the novice barely able to keep the tremble from his voice. "The refugees said the town was crawling with them! Why did they send us to scout if—"

"Shhh! How am I supposed to bloody know?" came Sheis's hiss. "Just keep your voice down."

Even though the woman was supposedly a veteran scout, Essan could see her knuckles stark white against the dark hilt of her long, black-bladed knife. Hunched behind her as the pair hid in a shadowy alley at the village's edge, the nervous cleric scrutinized her heavy leather pack, her new-looking belt, and her barely scuffed boots. Sheis had been hired by the church to investigate reports of demons, and every inch of her looked the woodwise hunter—too much so.

"You're not really a ranger, are you?" Essan blurted the words before he could even think to bite them back.

Sheis spun around, momentarily wide-eyed, then her look quickly lightened. "Do you know how much the church pays for these little forays? Why should some forest-skipper get that much coin?" She turned back to look out over the town, her beaded red hair jingling as she nodded toward a manor overlooking the hamlet.

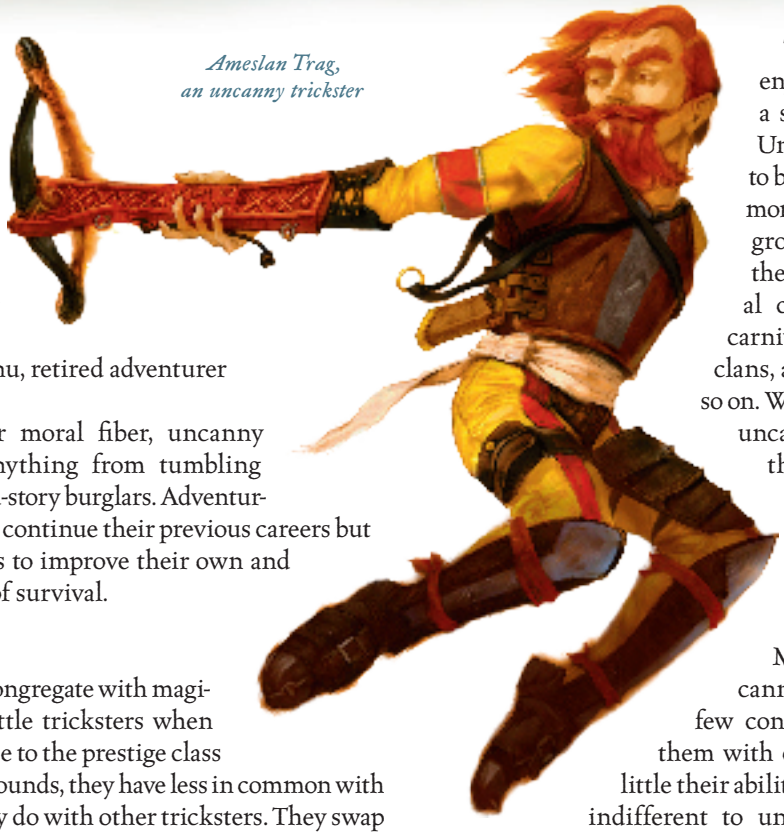
"Up there. I think I see something," she whispered, standing. "It's too late to back out on this now."

Essan took a long gulp and whimpered as he rose to follow. "Pelor preserve us."

UNCANNY TRICKSTERS IN THE WORLD

"I've seen his kind before. Just when you think you've seen everything he has to offer, he surprises you."

—Guled Conu, retired adventurer



Ameslan Trag, an uncanny trickster

Illus. by R. Gallegos

Depending on their moral fiber, uncanny tricksters can be anything from tumbling entertainers to second-story burglars. Adventuring characters simply continue their previous careers but use their many tricks to improve their own and their allies' chances of survival.

Organization

Uncanny tricksters congregate with magical tricksters and battle tricksters when possible. Having come to the prestige class from different backgrounds, they have less in common with one another than they do with other tricksters. They swap techniques, introduce newly developed tricks and trick-supporting equipment and magic, and share experiences. Outside observers might assume such a meeting is part of a circus or carnival, with tricksters springing about performing for the enjoyment and education of onlookers.

These gatherings, though enjoyable, do not represent a structured organization. Uncanny tricksters looking to become part of something more permanent usually join groups that appreciate both their abilities and their moral choices: thieves' guilds, carnivals, monasteries, ninja clans, adventuring groups, and so on. Within an organization, an uncanny trickster performs the role of his former adventuring class, enhanced with unusual techniques.

NPC Reactions

Most people look on uncanny tricksters with awe. A few conceited individuals view them with contempt and try to belittle their abilities, generally displaying indifferent to unfriendly attitudes. Adventurers respect uncanny tricksters for their discipline and training, and are generally friendly toward them.

Common folk do not understand the difference between uncanny tricksters and other trickster classes, so their atti-

UP IN SMOKES

Ambersmill, 714 CY

Bloody clerics! Sheis waved her hand rapidly, motioning for the overweight Pelorian to join her where she crouched at the base of a statue near the abandoned town's center. *I should never have conned my way into this job.*

With a trundling charge, Essan crashed into the statue next to the supposed ranger. He huffed in a most unstealthy manner, an irregular wheeze that turned Sheis's thoughts momentarily to suffocation. Refocusing her mind on the matter at hand, she pointed at the nearby manor house until the cleric composed himself enough to follow the line of her finger.

"Up there. See that?" she whispered, still holding onto at least the illusion of stealth. "Smoke."

Indeed, from the open doors of the many-pillared manor trailed several long wisps of gray-white smoke. Not the billowing clouds of some uncontrolled blaze, but a number of thin tendrils.

Trying to keep to the shadows, the pair approached the manor and climbed its cracked marble steps. The whitewashed front doors were thrown wide, allowing the smoke to issue forth. As Sheis neared, she caught a whiff of one of the lazily curling wisps, a scent that reminded her of every seedy dockside tavern or devilweed den she'd ever slummed in. Holding up a hand to stay the cleric behind her, Sheis slowly peered around the corner of the door frame.

Within lay the lavish entry hall of a landed noble's manor: a gaudy, self-indulgent display of fine stone, polished wood, rococo sculpture, and pretentious art. At its center smoldered a small fire surrounded by tobacco-leaf wrappings and empty humidors, giving off a column of intoxicating smoke that filled the room with its heady scents. Gawking at the sight, Sheis stumbled backward at the sound of the harsh, wheezing voice that boomed from the fire.

"Foolish human! Know you not that I am feared among your kind? Bow down and cower! Hide your face from Abernathanorial, Doom of Dryads, Dearth of Light, Demon of Darkest Smoke!"

Essan nearly bolted, but Sheis quickly drew one of her smaller blades—her luckiest one—and threw it directly at the pillar of smoke.

"Ooow!" came a shrill squeak, followed by a racking cough. Knitting her brow, Sheis marched right up to the smoking fire. She reached into the column of smoke and, to Essan's amazement, yanked out something dark and writhing. A minuscule form only about 2 feet tall, the gray thing looked like a human caricature, with a beaklike nose and beady black eyes, seemingly made of living smoke. In one wispy hand it clutched a fine, long pipe.

"Here's the 'demon invasion' those superstitious villagers were ranting about." She is barely held back a chuckle as she shook the spluttering creature at the amazed cleric. "A mephit with a bad habit and a sharp tongue!"

tudes span the spectrum. However, because some tricksters use their abilities to take advantage of less talented folk, a victim of such exploitation has a negative view of all tricksters, magical or otherwise, and is unfriendly at best.

UNCANNY TRICKSTER LORE

Characters with ranks in Knowledge (local) can research uncanny tricksters to learn more about them. When a character succeeds on a skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 10: Uncanny tricksters know more skill tricks than anyone else.

DC 15: An uncanny trickster continues to practice his other abilities even as he masters tricks, so he's capable of much more than just a few stunts.

DC 20: Uncanny tricksters don't have a formal organization, but they do occasionally gather with others who respect their talents.

DC 30: Characters who achieve this level of success can learn important details about specific uncanny tricksters in your campaign, including a notable individual, the area in which he operates, and the kinds of activities he undertakes.

The easiest way to find an uncanny trickster is at a trickster gathering. Because such events are rare, however, PCs seeking out an uncanny trickster should contact groups that are likely to seek out their talents, as described above.

UNCANNY TRICKSTERS IN THE GAME

Uncanny tricksters make interesting opponents. They have such a wide variety of abilities available to them that no two are ever the same. Their abilities, particularly those that allow for escape and evasion, can make them particularly frustrating opponents and set them up well as recurring villains.

A player who likes to surprise the DM or other players or who wants to bring cinematic action into a campaign would probably enjoy playing an uncanny trickster. The prestige class offers opportunities to perform actions otherwise not covered in the rules. An uncanny trickster character can fill any number of roles in a party, depending on his other class or classes.

Adaptation

The uncanny trickster is already a very generalized prestige class that can easily fit into any campaign setting. It does rely on the new rules for skill tricks, however, so it is not suitable for a campaign that does not incorporate them. Replacing bonus tricks with extra feats that enhance movement and defense can repurpose the character as a sneaky combatant with a more generalized approach to skills.

Sample Encounter

Unpredictable and talented, uncanny tricksters could show up anywhere, doing anything. PCs might encounter one at a trickster gathering, or in battle beside one or opposite one.

EL 10: Ameslan Trag uses his many abilities to protect the weak and punish the wicked. He always has a trick up his sleeve and can readily get out of scrapes that would otherwise finish him. PCs might run into Ameslan in the middle of a seemingly desperate fight—he tends to get in over his head, then pulls out several tricks to suddenly win the day. Depending on the situation, the party might come to his aid or merely watch in amusement.

AMESLAN TRAG **CR 10**

Male gnome rogue 7/uncanny trickster 3
CG Small humanoid
Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +5, Spot +13
Languages Common, Dwarven, Gnome, Orc

AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 19; +4 AC against giants, improved uncanny dodge
(+1 size, +3 Dex, +3 armor, +1 deflection, +1 natural)
hp 68 (10 HD)
Resist evasion
Fort +7, **Ref** +12, **Will** +5; +2 on saves against illusions

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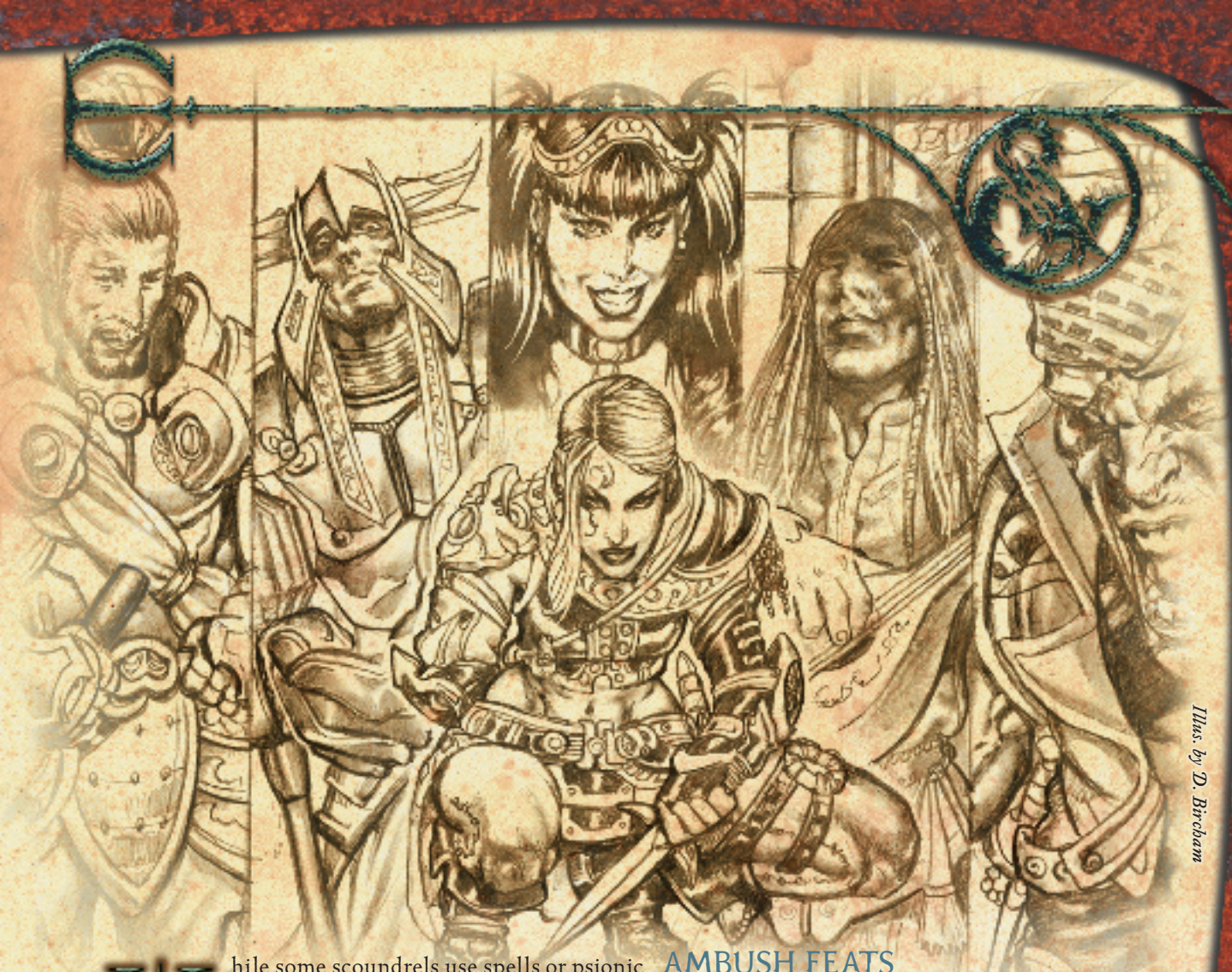
Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee mwk short sword +7/+2 (1d4–1/19–20)
Ranged *+1 light crossbow* +11 (1d6+1/19–20)
Base Atk +7; **Grp** +2
Atk Options Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, +1 on attacks against kobolds and goblinoids, sneak attack +5d6
Special Actions favorite trick (Slipping Past, Spot the Weak Point, Twisted Charge), skill tricks
Combat Gear *panic button* (strengthening)*
*New magic item described in Chapter 5
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 1st):
1/day—*dancing lights, ghost sound* (DC 10), *prestidigitation, speak with animals* (burrowing mammal only, duration 1 minute)

Abilities Str 8, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 9
SQ trap sense +3, trapfinding, tricky defense
Feats Freerunner*, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Finesse
*New feat described in Chapter 3
Skills Balance +18, Bluff +12, Climb +12, Craft (alchemy) +3, Diplomacy +1, Disguise –1 (+1 acting), Escape Artist +16, Hide +20, Intimidate +1, Jump +14, Listen +5, Move Silently +17, Sleight of Hand +18, Spot +13, Swim +4, Tumble +18, Use Rope +3 (+5 involving bindings)
Skill Tricks* Acrobatic Backstab, Back on Your Feet, Corner Perch, Escape Attack, Leaping Climber, Mosquito's Bite, Quick Swim, Slipping Past, Spot the Weak Point, Twisted Charge, Wall Walker
*Described in Chapter 3
Possessions combat gear plus *+1 leather armor,* masterwork short sword, *+1 light crossbow with* 40 bolts and 10 adamantine bolts, *amulet of natural armor +1, ring of protection +1, cloak of resistance +1, ring of feather falling,* thieves' tools



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While some scoundrels use spells or psionic powers to overcome challenges, the average scoundrel relies on more mundane methods to succeed. The right feat can make the difference between success and failure, and this chapter presents a wide range of new feat options for scoundrels looking for new tricks.

Speaking of tricks—this chapter also provides a new avenue for characters to use their skill points to gain an edge. The skill trick subsystem opens up a broad variety of exciting stunts and useful knacks that lets any character display the panache and style of the quintessential scoundrel.

NEW FEATS

Feats define a scoundrel's abilities in the taverns, back alleys, and other places where he must work his trade, and they can keep him alive when the job turns against him and he has to fight to survive. The feats in this section build on the talents of those classes that most typically become scoundrels, as well as on skill tricks. They include ambush feats for rogues and ninjas and some new bardic music feats.

This section also introduces luck feats, a new category of options that allow a character to call on the power of good fortune to aid his endeavors.

AMBUSH FEATS

Ambush feats allow you to use your sneak attack ability to inflict an additional harmful or hindering effect upon an opponent, at the cost of one or more of the extra damage dice you normally deal with a successful hit. You must declare your intent to use an ambush feat before making your attack roll, and your sneak attack must deal at least one extra die of damage (that is, you can't reduce the number of extra damage dice to zero). You can apply multiple ambush feats to the same attack as long as you still deal at least one extra die of damage with the attack.

The sudden strike class feature of a ninja (*Complete Adventurer*) is the equivalent of sneak attack for the purpose of qualifying for ambush feats.

Creatures immune to extra damage from sneak attacks are also immune to the secondary effects created by ambush feats. Even if a creature is vulnerable to sneak attacks, if your attack deals no damage to the creature (for example, if it is negated by the creature's damage reduction), the secondary effect doesn't occur.

Although the skirmish class feature of a scout (*Complete Adventurer*) doesn't count as sneak attack for the purpose of qualifying for feats, a scout with the Swift Ambusher feat (page 81) can combine

sneak attack and skirmish extra damage for the purpose of qualifying for ambush feats. Even with this feat, a scout can't sacrifice skirmish bonus damage to gain the benefit of an ambush feat.

Two feats that should retroactively be considered ambush feats appeared in the *Complete Warrior* supplement: Arterial Strike and Hamstring. The feats require no change, except to note the requirements given above.

BARDIC MUSIC FEATS

Bardic music feats, as the name suggests, require the bardic music ability, and they cost daily uses of the bardic music ability to activate. All bardic music feats require that the character be able to produce music to use the feat, even those that require only a free action and those that require no action at all.

Despite the names of the various bardic music feats, they work equally well with any variety of the Perform skill.

Class features that resemble bardic music, such as the war chanter's chanter music (*Complete Warrior*) or a seeker of the song's seeker music abilities (*Complete Arcane*), can be substituted for the bardic music prerequisite of this feat, and uses of those class features can be spent in place of bardic music uses to gain the benefit of the feat.

In general, bardic music feats do not function in an area of magical *silence*.

LUCK FEATS

Most scoundrels think themselves to be clever, surviving by their wits and escaping capture or injury with their masterful skills and abilities. Often, though, scoundrels survive simply out of dumb luck. The luck feats presented here put the power of luck (good and bad) into the hands of characters.

Luck feats don't directly improve your abilities or add new features to your repertoire. By selecting a luck feat, you gain access to a specific lucky effect (usually a reroll) that helps keep you alive or ensures that you succeed. Each additional luck feat grants you another specific lucky effect that can help you win even when the dice say you should lose, in addition to another daily luck reroll.

Though you as a player decide when to use a luck feat, in the game world a lucky result almost never occurs consciously. Instead, a luck reroll represents a fortuitous event, such as a fire giant inexplicably losing his grip on his weapon, a puddle on the floor causing you to slip and be missed by an arrow, or a bit of rust on a lock preventing it from fully closing—making it easier to pick than normal.

The Mechanics of Luck

When you select a luck feat, you gain access to a luck reroll similar to the power granted by the Luck domain. Unlike with that granted power, each luck feat specifies what kind of roll can be rerolled. For example, Magical Fortune allows you to reroll the damage from a single arcane spell you have just cast.

Typically, a luck feat grants one luck reroll per day, but luck rerolls can be used for any luck feat you have. For example, if you have Magical Fortune and Lucky Start, you gain two luck rerolls per day. You can use each of them either to reroll damage from an arcane spell or to reroll an initiative check.

Expending a luck reroll to use a luck feat is either a swift or immediate action, as noted in the feat description. Even if you somehow have the ability

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A little bit of luck goes a long way

to take more than one swift action or immediate action per round, you can't expend luck rerolls more than once to affect the same event.

Unless otherwise noted, you must decide whether to make a luck reroll after you have made the original roll, but before the success or failure of that roll has been announced. You must take the result of the reroll, even if it's worse than the original result.

Some luck feats allow you to expend luck rerolls to change fate in ways other than simply rerolling dice.

Your monk and ninja levels also stack for the purpose of determining your unarmed strike damage, as well as your *ki* strike class feature. For example, a 4th-level monk/6th-level ninja would deal 1d10 points of damage with her unarmed strike, and her unarmed strike would overcome damage reduction as a lawful magic weapon (as if she were a 10th-level monk).

In addition, you can multiclass freely between the monk and ninja classes. You must still remain lawful in order to continue advancing as a monk. You still face the normal XP penalties for having multiple classes more than one level apart.

FEAT DESCRIPTIONS

The new feats in this chapter are described below in alphabetical order. For a summary of prerequisites and benefits, see Table 3–1 on pages 74 and 75.

ADVANTAGEOUS AVOIDANCE [LUCK]

You have a knack for ducking at just the right moment.

Prerequisite: Character level 3rd, any luck feat.

Benefit: You can expend one luck reroll as an immediate action to force a foe to reroll a critical hit confirmation roll made when attacking you.

You can expend two luck rerolls as an immediate action to force a foe to reroll an attack roll made against you.

You gain one luck reroll per day.

Special: Unlike other luck feats, you can use this feat after seeing the success of the roll to be affected.

ASCETIC STALKER

You have practiced a secret technique that combines your considerable talents in unarmed combat with a greater understanding of your inner *ki*.

Prerequisite: *Ki* power, *ki* strike (magic).

Benefit: Your monk and ninja levels stack for the purpose of determining the size of your *ki* pool. For example, a 4th-level monk/2nd-level ninja with this feat could use her *ki* powers a number of times equal to 3 (half the sum of her monk and ninja levels) + her Wisdom bonus (if any).

A practitioner of the Ascetic Stalker style knows many secrets

Illus. by W. Maby

LUCK FEATS AND THE LUCKSTEALER

The luckstealer prestige class (*Races of the Wild*) provides another method of maximizing your own luck while simultaneously minimizing the luck of your opponent. The luckstealer has a pool of luck points stolen from other characters, which he uses for various purposes. In addition to the options described in the prestige class, a luckstealer with one or more luck feats can spend 3 points from his luck pool as though making a luck reroll, following all the normal rules for luck feats and luck rerolls.

Table 3–1: New Feats

General Feats	Prerequisites	Benefit
Ascetic Stalker[1]	*Ki* power, *ki* strike (magic)	Monk and ninja levels stack for unarmed strike damage and *ki* pool
Cool Head	Any two mental skill tricks	Learn two mental skill tricks and increase skill trick limit by one
Daredevil Athlete	—	Gain +5 competence bonus on physical skill check 3/day
Daring Outlaw	Grace +1, sneak attack +2d6	Rogue and swashbuckler levels stack for grace, dodge bonus, and sneak attack
Daring Warrior[2]	Grace +1, Weapon Specialization	Fighter and swashbuckler levels stack for grace, dodge bonus, and feats
Deadly Defense[2]	—	+1d6 damage with light weapons when fighting defensively
Expanded *Ki* Pool	*Ki* power	Gain three extra uses of your *ki* power
Enduring *Ki*	*Ki* power	Spend extra use of *ki* to add 1 round to duration
Freerunner	Any two movement skill tricks	Learn two movement skill tricks, increase skill trick limit by one
Improved Familiar	Ability to acquire a new familiar, compatible alignment, sufficiently high arcane spellcaster level	Gain better familiar
Improved Skirmish[3]	Skirmish +2d6/+1 AC	Move 20 feet to gain +2d6 points of damage, +2 AC
Martial Stalker[2]	Proficiency with all martial weapons, ki power	Fighter and ninja levels stack for ki pool, AC bonus, and feats
Master Spellthief	Ability to cast 2nd-level arcane spells, steal spell	Spellthief and arcane spellcaster levels stack for steal spell and arcane caster level; cast arcane spells in light armor
Poison Expert	Poison use, Craft (poisonmaking) 8 ranks	Your poisons' save DC is 1 higher
Poison Master	Poison use, Craft (poisonmaking) 8 ranks, Poison Expert	Your poisons deal +1 damage/die
Psithief	Manifester level 1st, steal spell	Steal power points instead of spells; gain new class skills
Savvy Rogue	Rogue level 10th	Your rogue special abilities improve
Sure Hand	Any two manipulation skill tricks	Learn two manipulation skill tricks and increase skill trick limit by one
Sweet Talker	Any two interaction skill tricks	Learn two interaction skill tricks, increase skill trick limit by one
Swift Ambusher[3]	Skirmish +1d6/+1 AC, sneak attack +1d6	Rogue and scout levels stack for skirmish bonuses
Swift Hunter[3]	Favored enemy, skirmish +1d6/+1 AC	Ranger and scout levels stack for skirmish bonuses, favored enemies

Ambush Feats	Prerequisites	Benefit
Concussion Attack	Sneak attack +3d6	Trade 2d6 sneak attack damage to apply –2 penalty to opponent's Int checks and Wis checks
Deafening Strike	Sneak attack +4d6	Trade 3d6 sneak attack damage to deafen target for 3 rounds
Disemboweling Strike	Sneak attack +5d6, Weapon Focus (any slashing)	Trade 4d6 sneak attack damage to deal 1d4 Con damage
Eldritch Erosion	Sneak attack +4d6, Knowledge (arcana) 1 rank	Trade 3d6 sneak attack damage to reduce SR/PR by 5
Head Shot	Sneak attack +6d6, Weapon Focus (any bludgeoning)	Trade 5d6 sneak attack damage to confuse target for 1 round
Impeding Attack	Sneak attack +4d6	Trade 3d6 sneak attack damage to apply –2 penalty to opponent's Str checks and Dex checks
Merciful Strike	Sneak attack +2d6	Trade 1d6 sneak attack damage to deal nonlethal damage
Mind Drain	Power point reserve, sneak attack +2d6	Trade 1d6 sneak attack damage to drain power points
Persistent Attacker	Sneak attack +5d6	Trade 4d6 sneak attack damage to allow sneak attack in next round
Throat Punch	Improved Unarmed Strike, sneak attack +3d6	Trade 2d6 sneak attack damage to hinder target's speech for 3 rounds

Special: A monk can select Ascetic Stalker as a bonus feat at 1st, 2nd, or 6th level instead of one of the other feats indicated for those levels (*PH* 41).

Better Lucky Than Good [Luck]

You can succeed where others would surely fail.

Prerequisite: Character level 6th, any two luck feats.

Benefit: If you roll a natural 1 when making an attack roll, you can expend one luck reroll as a swift action to instead treat the roll as a natural 20.

You can use this feat once per day.

You gain one luck reroll per day.

Chant of the Long Road [Bardic Music]

You can channel the power of your bardic music to encourage your allies to pick up the pace on a long walk.

Prerequisite: Bardic music, Perform 6 ranks.

Benefit: As a standard action, you can expend one daily use of your bardic music ability to allow yourself and all

Bardic Music Feats	Prerequisites	Benefit
Chant of the Long Road	Bardic music, Perform 6 ranks	Bardic music allows allies to move overland more quickly
Chord of Distraction	Bardic music, Perform 9 ranks	Bardic music renders target flat-footed against one ally
Epic of the Lost King	Bardic music, Perform 6 ranks	Bardic music removes fatigue and exhaustion
Sound of Silence	Bardic music, Perform 9 ranks	Bardic music deafens a target
Warning Shout	Bardic music, Perform 9 ranks, evasion	Bardic music grants evasion, +5 morale bonus on next Reflex save

Luck Feats	Prerequisites	Benefit
Advantageous Avoidance	Character level 3rd, any luck feat	Expend luck reroll to force foe to reroll critical threat confirmation, or three luck rerolls to force foe to reroll attack
Better Lucky than Good	Character level 6th, any two luck feats	Expend luck reroll to treat natural 1 on attack as natural 20 instead
Dumb Luck	Character level 6th, any two luck feats	Expend luck reroll to treat natural 1 on save as natural 20 instead
Fortuitous Strike	Character level 6th, any luck feat	Expend luck reroll to reroll attack, or two luck rerolls to reroll damage
Good Karma	Character level 3rd	Expend luck reroll to redirect attack against ally to you
Healer's Luck	—	Reroll amount cured by healing spell
Lucky Break	—	Reroll Strength check to break item or burst door
Lucky Catch	—	Reroll Balance, Climb, or Jump check
Lucky Fingers	—	Reroll Disable Device, Open Lock, or Sleight of Hand check
Lucky Start	—	Reroll initiative check
Magical Fortune	Caster level 3rd, any luck feat	Expend luck reroll to reroll damage dealt by spell, or two luck rerolls to reroll caster level check
Make Your Own Luck	Character level 6th, any luck feat	Reroll a skill check
Miser's Fortune	—	Your items get +5 bonus on saves; expend luck reroll to force foe to reroll a sunder attack or Str check to damage nearby object
Psychic Luck	Manifester level 3rd, any luck feat	Expend luck reroll to reroll damage dealt by power, or two luck rerolls to reroll manifester level check
Sly Fortune	—	Reroll Hide, Move Silently, or Tumble check
Survivor's Luck	Character level 9th, any luck feat	Reroll a saving throw
Tempting Fate	Character level 6th, any luck feat	Reroll stabilization check, expend luck reroll to avoid being killed
Third Time's the Charm	Character level 3rd, any luck feat, Luck domain	Reroll again with Luck domain granted power
Unbelievable Luck	Any luck feat	Gain two luck rerolls and +2 luck bonus on worst save
Victor's Luck	—	Reroll critical threat confirmation

1 A fighter can select this feat as one of his fighter bonus feats (*PH* 38).
2 A monk can select this feat as one of her monk bonus feats (*PH* 41).
3 A scout can select this feat as one of her scout bonus feats (*Complete Adventurer* 13).

allies within 60 feet to avoid taking nonlethal damage for hustling (*PH* 164). This requires 1 minute of performance, and the effect lasts for 1 hour.

CHORD OF DISTRACTION [BARDIC MUSIC]

You can channel the power of your bardic music to make a sudden sound or gesture that momentarily distracts an opponent.

Prerequisite: Bardic music, Perform 9 ranks.

Benefit: As an immediate action, you can expend three daily uses of your bardic music ability to distract an opponent. The target must be within 30 feet of you and able to hear or see you. Make a Perform check, opposed by the target's Sense Motive check (modified as if you were using Bluff to feint in combat). If you succeed, that opponent is rendered flat-footed against an ally of your choice.

The effect lasts until that opponent is attacked or until the start of your next turn, whichever comes first.

CONCUSSION ATTACK [AMBUSH]

Your attacks can damage your opponent's ability to think clearly.

Prerequisite: Sneak attack +3d6.

Benefit: Your successful sneak attack imposes a –2 penalty on the target's Intelligence and Wisdom checks, as well as on any Intelligence- and Wisdom-based skill checks, for 10 rounds. If you use this feat a second time on a target before 10 rounds have elapsed, the effect of the first use expires.

Using this feat reduces your sneak attack damage by 2d6.

COOL HEAD

Your mental acuity serves you better than most.

Prerequisite: Any two mental skill tricks.

Benefit: You immediately learn up to two mental skill tricks at no cost, and your limit on skill tricks known increases by one. See page 82 for details on mental skill tricks.

Normal: You are limited to a maximum number of skill tricks equal to one-half your character level.

DAREDEVIL ATHLETE

You are capable of pulling off amazing stunts.

Benefit: Three times per day, you can use an immediate action to gain a +5 competence bonus on a single Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Jump, Ride, Swim, or Tumble check.

Deadly Defense makes defensive fighting more dangerous for enemies

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DARING OUTLAW

You combine grace and stealth to deadly effect.

Prerequisite: Grace +1, sneak attack +2d6.

Benefit: Your rogue and swashbuckler levels stack for the purpose of determining your competence bonus on Reflex saves from the grace class feature and the swashbuckler's dodge bonus to AC. For example, a 7th-level rogue/4th-level swashbuckler has grace +2 and gains a +2 dodge bonus to AC, as if she were an 11th-level swashbuckler.

Your rogue and swashbuckler levels also stack for the purpose of determining your sneak attack bonus damage. For example, a 7th-level rogue/4th-level swashbuckler would deal an extra 6d6 points of damage with her sneak attack, as if she were an 11th-level rogue.

DARING WARRIOR

You combine agility and extraordinary combat prowess to great effect.

Prerequisite: Weapon Specialization, grace +1.

Benefit: Your fighter and swashbuckler levels stack for the purpose of determining your competence bonus on Reflex saves from the grace class feature and the swashbuckler's dodge bonus to AC. For example, a 6th-level fighter/5th-level swashbuckler has grace +2 and gains a +2 dodge bonus to AC, as if she were an 11th-level swashbuckler.

Your fighter and swashbuckler levels also stack for the purpose of qualifying for feats that require a minimum fighter level, such as Greater Weapon Focus.

Special: A fighter can select Daring Warrior as one of his fighter bonus feats (*PH 38*).

DEADLY DEFENSE

You are at your most dangerous when forced to protect yourself.

Benefit: When fighting defensively, you deal an extra 1d6 points of damage with any light weapon or with any weapon to which the Weapon Finesse feat applies (such as a rapier, spiked chain, or whip).

This feat's benefit applies only when you are unarmored or wearing light armor and not using a shield.

Special: If you have the Combat Expertise feat, you also gain the benefit of Deadly Defense when taking a penalty of at least –2 on your attack roll from that feat.

A fighter can select Deadly Defense as one of his fighter bonus feats (*PH 38*).

DEAFENING STRIKE [AMBUSH]

Your stealthy attack leaves your foe's head ringing.

Prerequisite: Sneak attack +4d6.

Benefit: Your successful sneak attack causes the target to be deafened for 3 rounds. If you use this feat a second time on a target before 3 rounds have elapsed, the effect of the first use expires.

Using this feat reduces your sneak attack damage by 3d6.

DISEMBOWELING STRIKE [AMBUSH]

You can slash open your opponent to devastating effect.

Prerequisite: Sneak attack +5d6, Weapon Focus (any slashing weapon).

Benefit: Your successful sneak attack with a slashing weapon for which you have selected Weapon Focus deals 1d4 points of Constitution damage in addition to its normal damage.

You can't use this feat against the same target more than once per day.

Using this feat reduces your sneak attack damage by 4d6.

DUMB LUCK [LUCK]

You can survive situations that should kill you.

Prerequisite: Character level 6th, any two luck feats.

Benefit: If you roll a natural 1 when making a saving throw, you can expend one luck reroll as an immediate action to instead treat the roll as a natural 20.

You can use this feat once per day.

You gain one luck reroll per day.

ELDRITCH EROSION [AMBUSH]

Your attack can weaken your foe's resistance to magic.

Prerequisite: Sneak attack +4d6, Knowledge (arcana) 1 rank.

Benefit: Your successful sneak attack reduces the target's spell resistance and power resistance by 5 (minimum 0) for 10 rounds. If you use this feat a second time on a target before 10 rounds have elapsed, the effect of the first use expires.

Using this feat reduces your sneak attack damage by 4d6.

EXPANDED KI POOL

You know the secret mantras that grant you greater understanding of your *ki*.

Prerequisite: *Ki* power.

Benefit: You gain three extra daily uses of your *ki* power (*ki* power is a class feature of the ninja; see the sidebar for details).

ENDURING KI

You can channel inner energy to make your *ki* powers last longer.

Prerequisite: *Ki* power.

Benefit: By spending an extra daily use of your *ki* power when you activate it, the chosen effect lasts for an additional round (*ki* power is a class feature of the ninja; see the sidebar for details).

You also gain one extra daily use of your *ki* power.

EPIC OF THE LOST KING [BARDIC MUSIC]

You can channel the power of your bardic music to reinvigorate your allies.

Prerequisite: Bardic music, Perform 6 ranks.

Benefit: As a move action, you can expend one daily use of your bardic music ability to remove fatigue from up to three allies (including yourself) within 30 feet. If you spend three daily uses of bardic music, you can remove exhaustion from your allies instead.

FORTUITOUS STRIKE [LUCK]

You can hit a foe in just the right place.

Prerequisite: Character level 6th, any luck feat.

Benefit: You can expend one luck reroll as a swift action to reroll a weapon damage roll.

You can expend two luck rerolls as a swift action to reroll an attack roll.

You gain one luck reroll per day.

FREERUNNER

You can move in more baffling ways than others.

Prerequisite: Any two movement skill tricks.

Benefit: You immediately learn up to two movement skill tricks at no cost, and your limit on skill tricks known increases by one. See page 82 for details on movement skill tricks.

Normal: You are limited to a maximum number of skill tricks equal to one-half your character level.

GOOD KARMA [LUCK]

You can use your luck to aid an ally—at the risk of your own neck.

Prerequisite: Character level 3rd.

Benefit: You can expend one luck reroll as an immediate action to redirect an attack made against an adjacent ally so that it is made against you instead. You must be within reach of the attacker (if a melee attack) or within range of the attack (if a ranged attack) in order to use this ability.

The attack roll result remains the same, but it is against your AC, rather than that of your ally. If the redirected attack hits you, you take an extra 50% damage from it.

You gain one luck reroll per day.

HEAD SHOT [AMBUSH]

By striking at your opponent's head, you can temporarily disrupt his thought processes.

Prerequisite: Sneak attack +6d6, Weapon Focus (any bludgeoning weapon).

Benefit: Your successful sneak attack with a bludgeoning weapon for which you have selected Weapon Focus leaves your foe *confused* for 1 round. A successful Will save (DC 10 + the number of extra damage dice normally dealt

KI POWER (SU)

A ninja can channel her *ki* to manifest special powers of stealth and mobility. She can use her *ki* powers a number of times per day equal to one-half her class level (minimum 1) + her Wisdom bonus (if any). *Ki* powers can be used only if a ninja is wearing no armor and is unencumbered.

As long as a ninja's *ki* pool isn't empty (that is, as long as she has at least one daily use remaining), she gains a +2 bonus on her Will saves.

A ninja's *ki* powers are ghost step, *ki* dodge, ghost strike, greater *ki* dodge, and ghost walk. (*Complete Adventurer* 5)

by your sneak attack + your Dex modifier) negates this effect. If you use this feat a second time on a target before 1 round has elapsed, the effect of the first use expires.

Using this feat reduces your sneak attack damage by 5d6.

Special: You must be able to reach your foe's head to use this feat with a melee attack.

HEALER'S LUCK [LUCK]

Your spells can heal more damage.

Benefit: You can expend one luck reroll as a swift action to reroll the number of points of damage healed by a conjuration (healing) spell you have just cast on your current turn.

You gain one luck reroll per day.

IMPEDING ATTACK [AMBUSH]

Your strikes render your target temporarily clumsy and awkward.

Prerequisite: Sneak attack +4d6.

Benefit: Your successful sneak attack imposes a –2 penalty on the target's Strength and Dexterity checks, as well as on any Strength- and Dexterity-based skill checks, for 10 rounds. If you use this feat a second time on a target before 10 rounds have elapsed, the effect of the first use expires.

Using this feat reduces your sneak attack damage by 3d6.

IMPROVED FAMILIAR

You can acquire a new familiar from a nonstandard list of creatures.

Prerequisite: Ability to acquire a new familiar, compatible alignment, sufficiently high arcane spellcaster level.

Benefit: When you choose a familiar, the creatures on the table below are also available. You can choose a familiar with an alignment up to one step away on each of the alignment axes (lawful through chaotic, good through evil). For example, a chaotic good spellcaster could acquire a neutral familiar. A lawful neutral spellcaster could acquire a neutral good familiar.

Except as noted here, improved familiars otherwise use the normal rules for familiars (*PH* 52).

Familiar	Alignment	Arcane Caster Level
Monstrous centipede, Small	N	2nd
Badger	N	3rd
Monstrous scorpion, Small	N	3rd
Viper, Medium	N	3rd
Monstrous spider, Small	N	4th
Vargouille*	NE	6th
Mephit, any	N	7th

*Vargouilles summoned as familiars do not possess the kiss supernatural ability.

Special: This feat was originally presented on page 200 of the *DMG*; the description here provides new alternatives for arcane spellcasters who want familiars stealthy and versatile enough to follow them anywhere.

IMPROVED SKIRMISH

With a few extra steps, you gain even greater benefits from your skirmishing combat style.

Prerequisite: Skirmish +2d6/+1 AC.

Benefit: If you move at least 20 feet away from where you were at the start of your turn, your skirmish damage increases by 2d6 and your competence bonus to AC from skirmish improves by 2.

Normal: A scout's bonus damage and AC bonus apply if she moves at least 10 feet away from where she was at the start of her turn (see the skirmish class feature in the sidebar on page 25).

Special: A scout can select Improved Skirmish as one of her scout bonus feats (*Complete Adventurer* 13).

Illus. by E. Widermann

With a timely Head Shot, a foe literally won't know what hit him

LUCKY BREAK [LUCK]

You can hit an object in just the right place.

Benefit: You can expend one luck reroll as a swift action to reroll a Strength check made to break an item or burst open a door.

You gain one luck reroll per day.

LUCKY CATCH [LUCK]

Your good fortune can help prevent you from falling to your doom.

Benefit: You can expend one luck reroll as an immediate action to reroll a Balance, Climb, or Jump check.

You gain one luck reroll per day.

LUCKY FINGERS [LUCK]

The winds of fortune guide your hands when you most need luck.

Benefit: You can expend one luck reroll as an immediate action to reroll a Disable Device, Open Lock, or Sleight of Hand check.

You gain one luck reroll per day.

LUCKY START [LUCK]

Sometimes your luck overcomes a slow natural reaction.

Benefit: You can expend one luck reroll to reroll an initiative check.

You gain one luck reroll per day.

Special: Unlike most other luck feats, using Lucky Start requires no action.

MAGICAL FORTUNE [LUCK]

Even you are sometimes surprised by how well your spells work.

Prerequisite: Caster level 3rd, any luck feat.

Benefit: You can expend one luck reroll as a swift action to reroll the damage dealt by a spell you have just cast.

You can expend two luck rerolls as a swift action to reroll a caster level check.

You gain one luck reroll per day.

MAKE YOUR OWN LUCK [LUCK]

Your hard work lets you exploit minor loopholes.

Prerequisite: Character level 6th, any luck feat.

Benefit: You can expend one luck reroll as an immediate action to reroll a skill check, as long as you have at least 1 rank in that skill.

You gain one luck reroll per day.

MARTIAL STALKER

You practice a powerful fighting style that focuses equally on martial skill and mystical dedication.

Prerequisite: Proficiency with all martial weapons, *ki* power.

Benefit: Your fighter and ninja levels stack for the purpose of determining the size of your *ki* pool, as well as your AC bonus. For example, a 5th-level fighter/1st-level ninja with this feat could use his *ki* powers a number of times equal to 3 (one-half his ninja and fighter levels) + his Wisdom bonus (if any), and would have a +1 bonus to AC (as if he were a 6th-level ninja).

Your fighter and ninja levels also stack for the purpose of qualifying for feats that require a minimum fighter level, such as Greater Weapon Focus.

Special: A fighter can select Martial Stalker as one of his fighter bonus feats (*PH 38*).

MASTER SPELLTHIEF

Your arcane studies allow you to mingle arcane magic of different flavors for great effect.

Prerequisite: Ability to cast 2nd-level arcane spells, steal spell.

Benefit: Your spellthief levels stack with levels of other arcane spellcaster classes (that is, levels of any class that grants arcane spellcasting other than the spellthief) for the purpose of determining what level of spell you can steal. For example, a 4th-level spellthief/4th-level wizard could steal spells of up to 4th level, as if he were an 8th-level spellthief.

Your spellthief and arcane spellcaster levels also stack when determining your caster level for all arcane spells. The character described above would have a caster level of 8th for both his spellthief spells and his wizard spells.

In addition, you do not incur a chance of arcane spell failure for arcane spells cast or stolen from other classes, but only if you are wearing light armor. You incur the normal arcane spell failure chance when wearing medium or heavy armor or when using a shield.

Normal: A spellthief does not incur a chance of arcane spell failure when casting spellthief spells in light armor. He incurs the normal arcane spell failure chance for other arcane spells he casts, including those stolen from arcane casters (*Complete Adventurer* 15).

MERCIFUL STRIKE [AMBUSH]

You can strike a creature's vital areas without killing it.

Prerequisite: Sneak attack +2d6.

Benefit: Your successful sneak attack deals nonlethal damage. When using this feat, you can ignore the usual –4 penalty on attack rolls for attempting to deal nonlethal damage with a lethal weapon.

Using this feat reduces your sneak attack damage by 1d6.

MIND DRAIN [AMBUSH]

Your attack can weaken your opponent's mental powers.

Prerequisite: Power point reserve, sneak attack +2d6.

Benefit: Your successful sneak attack drains power points from your target equal to its manifester level (minimum 1). If this attack reduces your target to 0 power points, the opponent also loses any psionic focus. A target that has no power points when you make the sneak attack is not affected by this feat. You can't use this feat on the same target more than once per round.

Using this feat reduces your sneak attack damage by 1d6.

MISER'S FORTUNE [LUCK]

Items belonging to you and your allies are abnormally resistant to damage.

Benefit: Whenever an opponent makes a sunder attack or Strength check to damage an object within 30 feet of you, you can expend one luck reroll as an immediate action to force that opponent to reroll.

In addition, as long as you still have one luck reroll remaining for the day, items in your possession receive a +5 luck bonus on saving throws.

You gain one luck reroll per day.

PERSISTENT ATTACKER [AMBUSH]

Once you find a target's weak point, you can easily strike it again.

Prerequisite: Sneak attack +5d6.

Benefit: If your sneak attack hits, your first attack against that creature on your next turn is also considered a sneak attack even if it wouldn't normally qualify.

Using this feat reduces your first sneak attack's damage by 4d6. The resulting second sneak attack deals its full extra damage.

POISON EXPERT

Your skill at crafting and delivering toxins has made you a more deadly poisoner.

Prerequisite: Craft (poisonmaking) 4 ranks, poison use.

Benefit: Choose a type of poison (contact, ingested, inhaled, or injury). The DC to resist both the initial and secondary damage of poisons of this type that you create and use increases by 1.

This feat has no effect on poisons used by other creatures, even if you craft those poisons. It also has no effect on natural poisons (those exuded from a creature's body).

Special: You can gain this feat multiple times. Its effect does not stack. Each time you take the feat, it applies to a new type of poison.

POISON MASTER

The toxins you create and use are particularly virulent.

Prerequisite: Poison Expert, Craft (poisonmaking) 8 ranks, poison use.

Benefit: Choose a type of poison (contact, ingested, inhaled, or injury) for which you have selected the Poison Expert feat. The initial and secondary damage dealt by poisons of this type that you create and use increases by 1 point per die of damage (or by 1 point, if it deals a fixed amount of damage). For example, lich dust used by a character with Poison Master (ingested) would deal initial damage of 2d6+2 Str and secondary damage of 1d6+1 Con plus 1d6+1 Str. If a poison doesn't deal damage, this feat has no effect.

This feat has no effect on poisons used by other creatures, even if you craft those poisons. It also has no effect on natural poisons (those exuded from a creature's body).

Special: You can gain this feat multiple times. Its effect does not stack. Each time you take the feat, it applies to a new type of poison for which you have selected Poison Expert.

PSITHIEF

You can drain psychic energy and use it against others.

Prerequisite: Manifester level 1st, steal spell.

Benefit: You can use your steal spell ability to siphon psionic energy instead of spell energy. Instead of stealing a spell, you can choose to steal a number of power points equal twice to the maximum level of spell you can steal minus 1 (up to a maximum value equal to the manifester level of the creature struck). For example, a 4th-level spellthief/1st-level psychic warrior could steal up to 3 power points; if he used this ability against a 2nd-level psion he could steal only 2 power points, since that is the target's manifester level.

You can use the stolen power points only to manifest a psionic power you already know. You must use these power points within 1 hour of stealing them; otherwise, the extra psionic energy fades harmlessly away. This feat otherwise follows the rules for the steal spell class feature (*Complete Adventurer* 16).

In addition, Knowledge (psionics) and Psicraft are spellthief class skills for you. These skills appear on page 38 of *Expanded Psionics Handbook*.

PSYCHIC LUCK [LUCK]

Some psions claim that luck doesn't exist. You know better.

Prerequisite: Manifester level 3rd, any luck feat.

Benefit: You can expend one luck reroll as a swift action to reroll the damage dealt by a psionic power you have just manifested.

You can expend two luck rerolls as a swift action to reroll a manifester level check.

You gain one luck reroll per day.

SAVVY ROGUE

You have mastered one or more of your rogue special abilities.

Prerequisite: Rogue level 10th.

Benefit: Based on the rogue special abilities you have (*PH* 50), you gain one or more additional special benefits as described below. You gain the benefits for all the special abilities you have, even those you gain after selecting this feat.

Crippling Strike: You can deal Strength damage even to a target that is immune to extra damage from sneak attacks.

Defensive Roll: You can use this ability three times per day, rather than once per day.

Improved Evasion: You gain a +2 competence bonus on Reflex saves.

Opportunist: You can use the opportunist ability as many times per round as you can make attacks of opportunity, but no more than once per creature per round. Each use of the opportunist ability counts as an attack of opportunity.

Skill Mastery: When taking 10 with a skill to which you have assigned skill mastery, you can treat the die roll as a 12 instead of as a 10. (In effect, you're "taking 12.")

Slippery Mind: You gain a +2 competence bonus on the extra save granted by slippery mind.

SLY FORTUNE [LUCK]

Your luck helps you find the right place to move to.

Benefit: You can expend one luck reroll as an immediate action to reroll a Hide, Move Silently, or Tumble check.

You gain one luck reroll per day.

SOUND OF SILENCE [BARDIC MUSIC]

You can channel the power of your bardic music to deafen your foes.

Prerequisite: Bardic music, Perform 9 ranks.

Benefit: As a standard action, you can expend two daily uses of your bardic music ability to deafen a single target for 3 rounds. A successful Will save (using your Perform check result as the DC) negates the effect. The target must be within 30 feet of you and be able to hear you.

SURE HAND

You can perform more amazing displays of legerdemain than normal.

Prerequisite: Any two manipulation skill tricks.

Benefit: You immediately learn up to two manipulation skill tricks at no cost, and your limit on skill tricks known increases by one. See page 82 for details on manipulation skill tricks.

Normal: You are limited to a maximum number of skill tricks equal to one-half your character level.

SURVIVOR'S LUCK [LUCK]

You can avoid situations that would surely affect others.

Prerequisite: Character level 9th, any luck feat.

Benefit: You can expend one luck reroll as an immediate action to reroll a saving throw you just failed.

You gain one luck reroll per day.

SWEET TALKER

Your social expertise is more pronounced than that of most others.

Prerequisite: Any two interaction skill tricks.

Benefit: You immediately learn up to two interaction skill tricks at no cost, and your limit on skill tricks known increases by one. See page 82 for details on interaction skill tricks.

Normal: You are limited to a maximum number of skill tricks equal to one-half your character level.

SWIFT AMBUSHER

You combine your scout training with the stealth of a rogue to open up new methods of ambushing enemies.

Prerequisite: Skirmish +1d6/+1 AC, sneak attack +1d6.

Benefit: Your rogue and scout levels stack for the purpose of determining the extra damage and bonus to Armor Class granted when skirmishing. For example, a 4th-level scout/7th-level rogue would deal an extra 3d6 points of damage and gain a +3 competence bonus to AC when skirmishing, as if she were an 11th-level scout.

In addition, you can qualify for ambush feats (see page 71) as if your sneak attack bonus damage were the sum of your skirmish damage and sneak attack bonus damage. You cannot sacrifice skirmish extra damage to use those feats, however.

Special: A scout can select Swift Ambusher as one of her scout bonus feats (*Complete Adventurer* 13).

SWIFT HUNTER

You have applied the hit-and-run tactics learned from scouting to your strong hunting abilities.

Prerequisite: Favored enemy, skirmish +1d6/+1 AC.

Benefit: Your ranger and scout levels stack for the purpose of determining the extra damage and bonus to Armor Class granted when skirmishing. For example, a 4th-level scout/1st-level ranger would deal an extra 2d6 points of damage and gain a +1 competence bonus to AC when skirmishing, as if she were a 5th-level scout.

Your ranger and scout levels also stack for the purpose of determining when you select additional favored enemies, as well as the total bonus granted against your favored enemies. For example, a 4th-level scout/1st-level ranger would have two favored enemies and could allocate an extra +2 bonus against one of those favored enemies, as if she were a 5th-level ranger.

In addition, your skirmish extra damage applies against any creature you have selected as a favored enemy, even if it is normally immune to extra damage from critical hits or skirmish attacks.

Special: A scout can select Swift Hunter as one of her scout bonus feats (*Complete Adventurer* 13).

TEMPTING FATE [LUCK]

You are very hard to kill.

Prerequisite: Character level 6th, any luck feat.

Benefit: You can expend a luck reroll to reroll a stabilization check.

In addition, once per day, whenever you have at least 1 hit point remaining and would be dealt enough damage to kill you, you can expend one luck reroll as an immediate action to take only enough damage to reduce you to –9 hit points. You automatically stabilize.

You gain one luck reroll per day.

Special: Unlike most other luck feats, using Tempting Fate requires no action.

THIRD TIME'S THE CHARM [LUCK]

Your deity smiles upon you.

Prerequisite: Character level 3rd, any luck feat, access to the Luck domain.

Benefit: You can expend one luck reroll as an immediate action to use the granted power of the Luck domain an additional time per day. You can only use this benefit immediately after using the Luck domain's granted power (in effect, this feat gives you a third chance to succeed on the roll).

You gain one luck reroll per day.

THROAT PUNCH [AMBUSH]

By making a precise punch to the throat, you can render a target unable to speak effectively.

Prerequisite: Improved Unarmed Strike, sneak attack +3d6.

Benefit: Your successful sneak attack delivered with an unarmed strike temporarily hinders the target's ability to speak. For the next 3 rounds, the target takes a –5 penalty on any skill check requiring speech and has a 50% chance of failure when casting a spell with a verbal component or activating a magic item with a command word. Multiple uses of this feat don't increase the duration beyond 3 rounds.

Using this feat reduces your sneak attack damage by 2d6.

Special: You must be able to reach your foe's neck to use this feat.

UNBELIEVABLE LUCK [LUCK]

The powers of fortune truly smile on you more than most mortals.

Prerequisite: Any luck feat.

Benefit: As long as you have at least one luck reroll remaining for the day, you gain a +2 luck bonus on whichever of your saves has the lowest base bonus. If two or more of your saves tie for the lowest base bonus, choose when you select this feat which save it applies to.

If your base save bonuses later change so that the chosen save no longer has the lowest base bonus, the luck bonus from this feat immediately applies to the save that now has the lowest base bonus.

You gain two luck rerolls per day.

VICTOR'S LUCK [LUCK]

You strike with devastating accuracy more often.

Benefit: You can expend one luck reroll as a swift action to reroll a critical threat confirmation roll.

You gain one luck reroll per day.

WARNING SHOUT [BARDIC MUSIC]

The force of your performance is so potent that it can guide an ally to safety.

Prerequisite: Bardic music, Perform 9 ranks, evasion.

Benefit: As an immediate action, you can expend two daily uses of your bardic music ability to grant a single ally (other than yourself) a +5 morale bonus on her next Reflex save and evasion (see the monk class feature, *PH* 41). The ally must be within 30 feet of you and able to see or hear you. The effect lasts until the target rolls a Reflex save or until the start of your turn, whichever comes first.

SKILL TRICKS

Skill tricks are an exciting new way of customizing your scoundrel, allowing her to perform such cinematic effects as swinging across a chasm hanging from a whip, leaping off a warhorse while swinging a sword, jumping and running up a wall, and other similar actions popular in movies but until now unsupported in the D&D rules. Because they require the expenditure of skill points, skill tricks appeal most strongly to members of those character classes that focus on skills.

The four types of skill tricks are interaction, manipulation, mental, and movement. Each type focuses on a different subset of skills. While any character can learn tricks of any type, members of certain classes favor particular types of tricks (whether due to the class's skill list, the character's areas of expertise, or both).

Interaction: These skill tricks influence social interaction between PCs and NPCs. They typically rely on skills used in those situations, such as Bluff, Diplomacy, and Sense Motive. Bards are the most common masters of these skill tricks, but anyone who relies on social interaction to achieve their goals—from bold paladins to boisterous sorcerers—can benefit from them.

Manipulation: A manipulation skill trick depends on the character's manual dexterity to perform some act of legerdemain. Such tricks use skills that employ similar talents, including Disable Device, Open Lock, and Sleight of Hand. Rogues and ninjas often boast a few manipulation tricks in their repertoire.

Mental: These tricks pit the mind and senses of the character against an opponent. Mental tricks focus on skills such as Concentration, Knowledge, and Spot. Since this category includes a wide range of skills, many different characters dabble in such tricks.

Movement: As the name suggests, movement tricks typically involve the character physically moving from one location to another. They use skills that come into play during movement, such as Balance, Jump, Move Silently, and Tumble. Monks, barbarians, and scouts are most likely to learn such tricks, but anyone looking for an edge on the battlefield has something to gain from them.

LEARNING SKILL TRICKS

Learning a skill trick costs 2 skill points. Whenever you acquire skill points, you can choose to spend skill points to acquire a skill trick instead of purchasing ranks in skills.

You can learn any skill trick, as long as you meet the prerequisite and can afford to expend 2 skill points. If you later no longer meet the prerequisite for a skill trick, you can't use it again until you once more qualify.

You can't learn more than one skill trick at any given level, and your total skill tricks cannot exceed one-half your character level (rounded up). Certain feats and

Table 3–2: Skill Tricks

Interaction	Prerequisites	Benefit
Assume Quirk	Disguise 5 ranks	Familiar viewers get no bonus to see through your disguise
Group Fake-Out	Bluff 8 ranks	Feint against multiple foes simultaneously
Never Outnumbered	Intimidate 8 ranks	Demoralize multiple foes in combat simultaneously
Second Impression	Bluff 5 ranks, Disguise 5 ranks	Make Bluff check to reestablish blown disguise
Social Recovery	Bluff 8 ranks, Diplomacy 5 ranks	Make Bluff check to replace a failed Diplomacy check
Timely Misdirection	Bluff 8 ranks	Successful feint allows you to avoid attacks of opportunity
Manipulation	**Prerequisites**	**Benefit**
Clever Improviser	Disable Device 5 ranks, Open Lock 5 ranks	Ignore penalty for Disable Device and Open Lock checks made without tools
Conceal Spellcasting	Concentration 1 rank, Sleight of Hand 5 ranks, Spellcraft 1 rank	Conceal your spellcasting from onlookers
Easy Escape	Medium or smaller size, Escape Artist 8 ranks	Gain bonus on check to escape grapple or pin
False Theurgy	Bluff or Sleight of Hand 8 ranks, Spellcraft 8 ranks	Your spell appears to be another spell of the same level
Healing Hands	Heal 5 ranks	Heal 1d6 damage when you stabilize a dying character
Hidden Blade	Sleight of Hand 5 ranks, Quick Draw	Draw hidden weapon as move action; treat foe as flat-footed
Mosquito's Bite	Sleight of Hand 12 ranks	Flat-footed target does not notice damage you deal with a light weapon
Opening Tap	Open Lock 12 ranks	Open a lock as a swift action
Quick Escape	Escape Artist 12 ranks	Escape from grapple or restraints more quickly than normal
Shrouded Dance	Hide 8 ranks, Perform (dance) 5 ranks	Use move action to gain concealment for 1 round
Sudden Draw	Sleight of Hand 8 ranks, Quick Draw	Draw hidden weapon as part of attack of opportunity
Whip Climber	Use Rope 5 ranks, proficiency with whip	Use a whip as a grappling hook
Mental	**Prerequisites**	**Benefit**
Clarity of Vision	Spot 12 ranks	Notice invisible enemies for 1 round
Collector of Stories	Knowledge (any) 5 ranks	Gain +5 bonus on Knowledge checks to identify monsters
Listen to This	Listen 5 ranks	Perfectly repeat what you've recently heard
Magical Appraisal	Appraise 5 ranks, Knowledge (arcana) 5 ranks, Spellcraft 12 ranks	Determine properties of magic items
Point it Out	Spot 8 ranks	Grant ally a free Spot check to see something you've spotted
Spot the Weak Point	Spot 12 ranks	Make your next attack a touch attack
Swift Concentration	Concentration 12 ranks	Maintain concentration on spell as swift action
Movement	**Prerequisites**	**Benefit**
Acrobatic Backstab	Tumble 12 ranks	Move through foe's space to render it flat-footed
Back on Your Feet	Tumble 12 ranks	React immediately to stand up from prone
Corner Perch	Climb 8 ranks	Perch in chimney or corner to leave hands free
Dismount Attack	Ride 5 ranks	Make a fast dismount from moving mount to charge a foe
Escape Attack	Escape Artist 8 ranks	Make an attack the same round you escape a grapple
Extreme Leap	Jump 5 ranks	Horizontal jump of at least 10 feet allows 10 extra feet of movement that round
Leaping Climber	Climb 5 ranks, Jump 5 ranks	Add jump distance to start of climb
Nimble Charge	Balance 5 ranks	Run or charge across difficult surface without Balance check
Nimble Stand	Tumble 8 ranks	Stand from prone safely
Quick Swimmer	Swim 5 ranks	Swim 10 additional feet with successful check
Slipping Past	Escape Artist 5 ranks, Tumble 5 ranks	Move into tight space without penalties
Speedy Ascent	Climb 5 ranks	Climb 10 additional feet with successful check
Tumbling Crawl	Tumble 5 ranks	Crawl 5 feet without provoking attacks of opportunity
Twisted Charge	Balance 5 ranks, Tumble 5 ranks	Make one direction change during a charge
Up the Hill	Balance 5 ranks, Jump 5 ranks	Move up slope or stairs at normal speed
Walk the Walls	Climb 12 ranks, Tumble 5 ranks	Run straight up wall for 1 round
Wall Jumper	Climb 5 ranks, Jump 5 ranks	Leap from wall as if making a running jump

prestige class features allow a character to exceed these limits. If you use the retraining rules in *Player's Handbook II*, you can choose to unlearn any one skill trick when you attain a new level, assigning the reclaimed skill points as you wish (either to buy skill ranks or to learn a different skill trick).

You can learn a skill trick only once; you either know it or you don't.

Illus. by C. Frank

A combat against tricky rogues turns bad for the city guard

USING SKILL TRICKS

Skill tricks are special maneuvers, so you can't just use them as often as you want. Unless otherwise noted, a skill trick can be performed only once per encounter (or once per minute, for scenes that don't involve combat or other conflict). This restriction sets skill tricks apart from feats and class features, which are often repeatable.

Typically, performing a skill trick is either part of another action or an action in itself. Each skill trick's description specifies what sort of action, if any, is required.

A skill trick usually either requires a successful skill check to pull off, or it "piggybacks" on a skill check you're already making. For example, the Extreme Leap trick functions only if you've already succeeded on a DC 20 Jump check (or DC 10 with a running start) to make a horizontal jump; it doesn't require a separate Jump check. Exceptions to this general rule are noted in the skill trick descriptions.

Using a skill trick does not provoke attacks of opportunity unless its description specifically states that it does (or it involves an action that would normally provoke attacks of opportunity, such as moving out of a threatened square).

TRICK DESCRIPTIONS

The skill tricks your character can learn are presented alphabetically and follow the format presented below.

SKILL TRICK NAME [TYPE OF TRICK]

Description of what the trick lets you do, in plain language.

Prerequisite: A minimum ability score, a feat or feats, a minimum number of ranks in one or more skills, or any other attribute required to learn the skill trick.

Benefit: What the skill trick enables the character ("you" in the trick description) to do. Learning the same skill trick more than once gives you no extra benefit, nor does it let you use that skill trick more often than normal.

ACROBATIC BACKSTAB [MOVEMENT]

You dart past your opponent's attacks, ending up perfectly positioned for a devastating counterattack.

Prerequisite: Tumble 12 ranks.

Benefit: If you succeed on a Tumble check to move through an enemy's space, you can treat that enemy as flat-footed against the next melee attack you make against it on your current turn.

Your enemy must be standing on the ground or floor in order for you to use this trick.

ASSUME QUIRK [INTERACTION]

You can perfectly imitate a small habit or idiosyncrasy of a person you impersonate in order to throw off suspicion.

Prerequisite: Disguise 5 ranks.

Benefit: When impersonating a particular individual, you can eliminate the normal Spot bonus granted to a viewer familiar with that individual (PH 73). The effect extends to all viewers.

Using this trick requires no special action, but you can maintain the deception for only 1 hour per day.

BACK ON YOUR FEET [MOVEMENT]

You can hop back to your feet instantly if you fall.

Prerequisite: Tumble 12 ranks.

Benefit: If you fall prone for any reason, you can stand up as an immediate action without provoking attacks of opportunity.

CLARITY OF VISION [MENTAL]

You can briefly see invisible opponents.

Prerequisite: Spot 12 ranks.

Benefit: As a swift action, you can attempt a DC 20 Spot check. If successful, you focus your vision so clearly that you can pinpoint the location of invisible creatures within 30 feet. This clarity lasts until the end of your turn.

CLEVER IMPROVISER [MANIPULATION]

Tools? Why would you need tools? It's just a combination lock with a poison needle trap, after all.

Prerequisite: Disable Device 5 ranks, Open Lock 5 ranks.

Benefit: When making a Disable Device or Open Lock check without using thieves' tools, you ignore the normal –2 penalty.

You can use this trick any number of times per day until you fail a Disable Device or Open Lock check made without using thieves' tools. After a failure, you can't use Clever Improviser again until after you have rested for 8 hours.

COLLECTOR OF STORIES [MENTAL]

You've heard so many tales of legendary monsters that you remember all sorts of gory details.

Prerequisite: Knowledge (any) 5 ranks.

Benefit: When you attempt a trained Knowledge check to identify a creature or to learn its special powers or vulnerabilities, you gain a +5 competence bonus on the check.

CONCEAL SPELLCASTING [MANIPULATION]

You can cast spells without others noticing.

Prerequisite: Concentration 1 rank, Sleight of Hand 5 ranks, Spellcraft 1 rank.

Benefit: You can cast a spell without revealing that you are doing so. Make a Sleight of Hand check as part of the action used to cast the spell, opposed by the Spot checks of onlookers. If you are successful, an observer can't tell that you're casting a spell. That observer cannot make an attack of opportunity against you for casting, nor can it attempt to counter your spell.

CORNER PERCH [MOVEMENT]

You can brace yourself against walls to leave your hands free.

Prerequisite: Climb 8 ranks.

Benefit: If you succeed on a Climb check to ascend or descend either a "chimney," where you can brace against opposite walls, or a corner where you can brace against perpendicular walls (PH 69), you can suspend yourself momentarily. Until the end of your next turn, you can use your hands freely for any other purpose (including attacking) without risk of falling. At the end of your next turn, you fall from the wall unless you succeed on a Climb check against the normal DC + 5 (made as a move action) or you have succeeded on another Climb check to move up or down the wall as normal.

Example: Ember the monk succeeds on a DC 15 Climb check to scramble up 10 feet (one-quarter of her speed) into a corner formed by two typical dungeon walls. Using Corner Perch, she then braces her legs against the walls and uses her remaining standard action to draw and throw a shuriken at a bugbear on the ground below her.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN: SKILL TRICKS AND FEATS

At first glance, skill tricks resemble feats both in their presentation and their effects. So, what makes a skill trick different from a feat? Three factors help set skill tricks apart.

Scope of Effect: Most skill tricks allow a character to perform an action that, while interesting and useful, doesn't equal the power level of a typical feat. Acrobatic Backstab is a potent trick, but in the long run it's not nearly as significant as Rapid Shot, Cleave, or Spring Attack. A skill trick should never provide a benefit as good as that of a feat.

Limited Use: Because a character usually can use a skill trick only once per encounter, a trick never becomes as important in a character's arsenal as a feat (which usually functions as often as needed).

All about Skills: Skill tricks have a skill rank prerequisite, a skill point cost, and (in most cases) a skill check requirement. These conditions place tricks firmly in the hands of a specific subset of characters—those with plenty of skill points to meet prerequisites, buy tricks, and succeed on the skill checks necessary to pull off the tricks. In addition, skill tricks allow characters a different application for their skill points, a resource that until now has had only one outlet.

Illus. by E. Widermann

Ember uses Corner Perch to stay out of an opponent's reach

On her next turn, still braced in the corner, she draws her quarterstaff and attacks an ogre that has moved next to her, gaining a +1 bonus on the attack roll for higher ground. At the end of that turn, she drops from the wall rather than attempting to hold her position. Since she has the slow fall class feature, Ember takes no damage from the drop.

DISMOUNT ATTACK [MOVEMENT]

You can leap out of the saddle onto a foe.

Prerequisite: Ride 5 ranks.

Benefit: If your mount has moved at least 10 feet in this round and you succeed on a fast dismount (Ride, *PH* 80), you can use a standard action to attack an adjacent opponent as if you had charged that opponent.

EASY ESCAPE [MANIPULATION]

You can slip free from the grasp of a larger enemy with ease.

Prerequisite: Medium or smaller size, Escape Artist 8 ranks.

Benefit: If your opponent is larger than Medium, you gain a circumstance bonus on your Escape Artist check to escape a grapple or pin. The size of the bonus depends on your opponent's size, according to the following table.

Opponent Size	Escape Artist Bonus
Large	+4
Huge	+8
Gargantuan	+12
Colossal	+16

ESCAPE ATTACK [MOVEMENT]

You can follow a successful escape with a swift attack.

Prerequisite: Escape Artist 8 ranks.

Benefit: When you escape a grapple, you can make a single melee attack with a light weapon as a swift action against the opponent that was grappling you. The opponent is considered flat-footed against this attack. You must have the weapon in hand at the beginning of your turn in order to use this trick.

EXTREME LEAP [MOVEMENT]

Your extraordinary leaping ability carries you over great distances.

Prerequisite: Jump 5 ranks.

Benefit: If you make a horizontal jump of at least 10 feet during your turn, you can spend a swift action to move an additional 10 feet on that turn.

FALSE THEURGY [MANIPULATION]

"How's that *magic missile* feel? I'm sorry—did you think I was casting *sleep*?"

Prerequisite: Bluff or Sleight of Hand 8 ranks, Spellcraft 8 ranks.

Benefit: As a swift action when casting a spell, you can adjust the spell's verbal and somatic components to

mimic those of another spell of your choice of the same level. Any creature using Spellcraft or any other means to identify the spell you're casting believes it to be the other spell instead.

This trick renders your spell immune to the normal method of counterspelling, though *dispel magic* or a similar effect still works normally. Of course, once the spell takes effect, it can be identified and dealt with normally (a *fireball* still looks and feels like a *fireball* once you've cast it).

GROUP FAKE-OUT [INTERACTION]

You lean left, go right, and leave a whole group of enemies holding the bag.

Prerequisite: Bluff 8 ranks.

Benefit: You can use Bluff to feint in combat (PH 68) against more than one opponent. Make one Bluff check opposed by separate Sense Motive checks for each opponent. For each opponent after the first that you wish to affect, you take a cumulative –2 penalty on your Bluff check.

Example: Lidda wants to feint against a group of three orcs, so she rolls a Bluff check with a –4 penalty. Each orc rolls a separate Sense Motive check opposed by Lidda's adjusted Bluff check result.

HEALING HANDS [MANIPULATION]

You can bring someone back from the brink of death.

Prerequisite: Heal 5 ranks.

Benefit: If you succeed on a Heal check made to stabilize a dying character, that character also heals 1d6 points of damage.

HIDDEN BLADE [MANIPULATION]

You can quickly draw a hidden weapon to make a deadly strike.

Prerequisite: Sleight of Hand 5 ranks, Quick Draw.

Benefit: After you have used the Sleight of Hand skill to successfully conceal a weapon (PH 81), you can draw that weapon as a move action instead of a standard action. An opponent that was unaware of the concealed weapon is treated as flat-footed against the first attack you make in that turn.

LEAPING CLIMBER [MOVEMENT]

There's no better way to start a tough climb than by leaping up the wall.

Prerequisite: Climb 5 ranks, Jump 5 ranks.

Benefit: If you begin a climb by making a Jump check as a swift action, you can add the vertical distance of your jump to the distance climbed in that round. Treat the Jump check as being made with a running start even if you didn't move at least 20 feet.

Example: Ember the monk is standing at the base of a craggy cliff and wants to scale the cliff as quickly as possible. She spends a swift action to make a Jump check and gets a result of 24. Thus, she adds 6 feet to the distance she climbs in that round.

LISTEN TO THIS [MENTAL]

You can perfectly repeat to others what you hear.

Prerequisite: Listen 5 ranks.

Benefit: Whenever you make a successful Listen check to hear a noise, you can describe that sound any time up to 1 hour later with such clarity that any individuals hearing the description are treated as if they had heard the sound themselves.

This trick is particularly useful if you overhear a conversation but don't understand the language spoken, since it allows you to repeat it verbatim to an ally who might be able to translate.

MAGICAL APPRAISAL [MENTAL]

You can judge the usefulness of magic items.

Prerequisite: Appraise 5 ranks, Knowledge (arcana) 5 ranks, Spellcraft 12 ranks.

Benefit: When you succeed by 5 or more on a Spellcraft check to determine the school of magic of the aura surrounding a magic item (by casting *detect magic*), you can then spend 1 minute concentrating to also learn the properties of the item, as if you had cast *identify*.

You can use this skill trick once per day.

MOSQUITO'S BITE [MANIPULATION]

You can deliver a vicious strike without your target feeling a thing.

Prerequisite: Sleight of Hand 12 ranks.

Benefit: If you use a light weapon to hit a flat-footed opponent, you can choose to have the opponent not realize that it has been hit until the start of your next turn. Instead, that opponent reacts as if you had attacked and missed.

Using this skill trick doesn't require an action on your part.

This trick doesn't allow the opponent to ignore any of the other effects of your attack, such as ability damage from poison on your blade or falling unconscious when reduced to fewer than 0 hit points.

NEVER OUTNUMBERED [INTERACTION]

You can demoralize multiple enemies.

Prerequisite: Intimidate 8 ranks.

Benefit: When you use Intimidate to demoralize an opponent (PH 76), you can affect all enemies within 10 feet that can see you, rather than only a single enemy you threaten. Each enemy rolls a separate modified level check to oppose your Intimidate check, but the skill check otherwise works as normal.

NIMBLE CHARGE [MOVEMENT]

You can run across treacherous surfaces with ease.

Prerequisite: Balance 5 ranks.

Benefit: You can run or charge across a difficult surface without needing to make a Balance check (PH 67).

Illus. by F. Vohwinkel

Devis uses Mosquito's Bite to skewer an unsuspecting hobgoblin

NIMBLE STAND [MOVEMENT]

You can rely on your acrobatic talent to stand up from prone safely.

Prerequisite: Tumble 8 ranks.

Benefit: You can stand up from prone without provoking attacks of opportunity.

OPENING TAP [MANIPULATION]

"No time to waste on tools—a sharp tap should pop that lock!"

Prerequisite: Open Lock 12 ranks.

Benefit: As a swift action, you can make an Open Lock check with a –10 penalty by tapping a lock with a hard, blunt object such as the pommel of a weapon. You don't take any additional penalty for making the check without thieves' tools.

You can use this trick any number of times per day until you fail an Open Lock check made in this way. After a failure, you can't use Opening Tap again until after you have rested for 8 hours.

POINT IT OUT [MENTAL]

You can show others what you see.

Prerequisite: Spot 8 ranks.

Benefit: When you make a successful Spot check, you can spend an immediate action to grant a single ally a free Spot check to see the same thing (with a +2 circumstance bonus). Your ally must be within 30 feet of you and able to see or hear you to benefit from this effect.

QUICK ESCAPE [MANIPULATION]

In the blink of an eye, you can escape nearly any tight spot.

Prerequisite: Escape Artist 12 ranks.

Benefit: This trick has two options, either of which can be used once per encounter.

You can make an Escape Artist check to escape from a grapple or pin as a swift action. You can use this trick even if you have already used a standard action on your current turn to attempt the same escape.

Alternatively, you can make any Escape Artist check that would normally require a full-round action as a move action. You can't use this option more than once per day against the same kind of restraint.

QUICK SWIMMER [MOVEMENT]

You can push yourself to swim faster.

Prerequisite: Swim 5 ranks.

Benefit: If you succeed on a Swim check to move at least 10 feet, you can move an extra 10 feet as part of that action.

SECOND IMPRESSION [INTERACTION]

You can convince someone of your false identity even after your disguise fails.

Prerequisite: Bluff 5 ranks, Disguise 5 ranks.

Benefit: If an observer sees through your disguise with a successful Spot check, you can (as an immediate action) attempt a Bluff check to convince him that he's mistaken. Use the observer's Spot check result as the DC for your Bluff check; if you succeed, the observer ignores the

evidence of his own senses in favor of what your disguise attempts to show.

You must be aware of the observer's discovery in order to use this trick; for example, you can't use it against someone viewing you secretly, nor can you use it against someone who sees through your disguise but keeps that information secret. When in doubt, the DM should allow a character to use this trick if she has any reason to fear that her cover has been blown.

You can use this trick only once per day, but its effect extends to all viewers within 30 feet of you. For example, you could attempt it against an entire patrol of guards confronting you just as effectively as against a single person.

This trick doesn't let you maintain a disguise that has been defeated by other means; for example, if your *disguise self* spell is penetrated by a *true seeing* spell, Second Impression won't help.

SHROUDED DANCE [MANIPULATION]

You can seem to be where you aren't.

Prerequisite: Hide 8 ranks, Perform (dance) 5 ranks.

Benefit: As a move action, you can attempt a DC 20 Hide check. If you succeed, you have concealment until the start of your next turn.

SOCIAL RECOVERY [INTERACTION]

You can talk your way out of a problem you talked yourself into.

Prerequisite: Bluff 8 ranks, Diplomacy 5 ranks.

Benefit: If your Diplomacy check to influence an NPC's attitude fails, you can spend another full round talking to the NPC, then make a Bluff check with a –10 penalty. Use the result of this check in place of the Diplomacy check result, except that it can't improve the NPC's attitude by more than one step.

Once you use this skill trick (successfully or not), you cannot use it against the same target again for 24 hours.

SLIPPING PAST [MOVEMENT]

You can slip through a tight space without breaking stride.

Prerequisite: Escape Artist 5 ranks, Tumble 5 ranks.

Benefit: As a swift action, you can ignore the additional movement cost and penalty on attack rolls and to AC when squeezing through a narrow space (*PH* 148). The benefit lasts until the start of your next turn.

SPEEDY ASCENT [MOVEMENT]

You can produce a burst of speed when climbing.

Prerequisite: Climb 5 ranks.

Benefit: If you succeed on a Climb check to move at least 10 feet, you can move an extra 10 feet as part of that action.

SPOT THE WEAK POINT [MENTAL]

Your keen eyes allow you to place attacks where they'll do the most good.

Prerequisite: Spot 12 ranks.

Benefit: As a standard action, you can attempt a Spot check to find a weakness in your opponent's defenses. The DC of this check equals the opponent's AC. If the check succeeds, your next attack against that opponent (which must be made no later than your next turn) is treated as a touch attack.

If you use a ranged weapon to deliver the attack, your opponent must be within 30 feet of you in order for you to benefit from the trick.

SUDDEN DRAW [MANIPULATION]

You can quickly draw a hidden weapon to make a deadly strike.

Prerequisite: Sleight of Hand 8 ranks, Quick Draw.

Her Sudden Draw trick puts Lidda on the offensive

Illus. by H. Lyon

Benefit: If an opponent provokes an attack of opportunity from you, you can draw a weapon that you have successfully concealed using Sleight of Hand (PH 81) as an immediate action to deliver the attack of opportunity with that weapon. That opponent is treated as flat-footed against the attack with the concealed weapon.

SWIFT CONCENTRATION [MENTAL]

You can maintain your mental focus while attending to another task.

Prerequisite: Concentration 12 ranks.

Benefit: You can maintain concentration on a spell or similar effect as a swift action.

TIMELY MISDIRECTION [INTERACTION]

You can divert an opponent's attention to avoid its attacks.

Prerequisite: Bluff 8 ranks.

Benefit: If you succeed on a Bluff check to feint in combat (PH 68), your opponent can't make any attacks of opportunity against you until the start of its next turn. This effect is in addition to the normal benefits of a successful feint.

TUMBLING CRAWL [MOVEMENT]

You can safely roll away from danger.

Prerequisite: Tumble 5 ranks.

Benefit: By succeeding on a DC 15 Tumble check, you can crawl 5 feet as a move action without provoking attacks of opportunity. Crawling normally provokes attacks of opportunity from any attackers who threaten you at any point during your crawl (PH 142).

TWISTED CHARGE [MOVEMENT]

You can charge in a crooked line.

Prerequisite: Balance 5 ranks, Tumble 5 ranks.

Benefit: When you charge, you can make one turn of up to 90 degrees during your movement. You can't move more than your speed as part of this charge. All other restrictions on charges still apply, and you must have line of sight to the opponent at the start of your turn.

UP THE HILL [MOVEMENT]

You can move quickly up a slope.

Prerequisite: Balance 5 ranks, Jump 5 ranks.

Benefit: You can move up a steep slope or stairs at your normal speed instead of at half speed. This effect lasts for 1 round.

WALK THE WALLS [MOVEMENT]

You can run straight up a wall for a few seconds.

Prerequisite: Climb 12 ranks, Tumble 5 ranks.

Benefit: You can move up a wall without making a Climb check. Each 5 feet of vertical movement costs you 4 squares of movement, and you must begin and end your turn on a horizontal surface.

Illus. by C. Frank

Lidda hurls herself from a wall to surprise an enemy

WALL JUMPER [MOVEMENT]

There's no better way to end a tough climb than by leaping from the wall.

Prerequisite: Climb 5 ranks, Jump 5 ranks.

Benefit: If you have succeeded on a Climb check to ascend or descend a wall during this or your previous turn, you can leap horizontally from that wall as if you had a running start.

WHIP CLIMBER [MANIPULATION]

You can use a whip as a grappling hook.

Prerequisite: Use Rope 5 ranks, proficiency with the whip.

Benefit: You can use a whip as a makeshift grappling hook, lashing it around a protrusion or other firm, weight-bearing object in order to climb a wall or swing across a chasm. You make Climb checks using the whip as if it were a normal rope. Using this feat requires a Use Rope check as normal for securing a grappling hook (PH 86) but takes only a move action.

Illus. by D. Bircham

Many scoundrels trust to their luck and to the whims of fate, while others rely purely on their skills and physical abilities. Those who can, however, use magic. Magic is reliable, customizable, and easily concealable, all traits that scoundrels rely on. Scoundrels who are also spellcasters naturally seek spells designed specifically for their needs. Such spells not only aid scoundrels in their many illicit trades, but also support the new rules for luck and skill tricks presented in Chapter 3.

The new spells in this chapter are designed for the standard spellcasting classes from the *Player's Handbook*, and by extension all other classes that use those spell lists. A few spells also support the assassin and the hexblade (*Complete Warrior*).

THE POLYMORPH SUBSCHOOL

The polymorph subschool was introduced in *Player's Handbook II*.

A spell of the polymorph subschool changes the target's form from one shape to another. Unless stated otherwise in the spell's description, the target of such a spell takes on all the statistics (mental and physical) and special abilities of an average member of the new form in place of its own, except as follows.

- The target retains its own alignment (and personality, within the limits of the new form's ability scores).
- The target retains its own hit points.
- The target is treated as having its normal Hit Dice for the purpose of adjudicating effects based on HD, such as the *sleep* spell, though it uses the new form's base attack bonus, base save bonuses, and all other statistics derived from Hit Dice.
- The target retains the ability to understand the languages it understands in its normal form. If the new form is normally capable of speech, the target retains the ability to speak these languages as well. It can write in the languages it understands, but only if the new form is capable of writing in some manner (even a primitive manner, such as drawing in the dirt with a paw).

In all other ways, the target's normal game statistics are effectively replaced by those of the new form. The target loses all the special abilities it has in its normal form, including its class features (even if the new form would normally be able to use those class features).

If the new form's size is different from the target's normal size, its new space must share as much of the original form's space as possible,

squeezing into the available space (*PH* 148) if necessary. If insufficient space exists for the new form, the spell fails.

Any gear worn or carried by the target melds into the new form and becomes nonfunctional. When the target reverts to its true form, any objects previously melded into the new form reappear in the same location on its body they previously occupied and are once again functional. Any new items worn in the assumed form fall off and land at the target's feet.

The spellcaster can freely designate the new form's minor physical qualities (such as hair color and skin color) within the normal ranges for a creature of that kind. The new form's significant physical qualities (such as height, weight, and gender) are also under the spellcaster's control, but they must fall within the norms for the new form's kind. The target of a polymorph spell is effectively camouflaged as a creature of its new form, and gains a +10 bonus on Disguise checks if it uses this ability to create a disguise.

If the target of a polymorph spell is slain or rendered unconscious, the spell ends. Any part of the body that is separated from the whole remains polymorphed until the effect ends.

Incorporeal or gaseous creatures are immune to polymorph spells, as are creatures of the plant type. A creature with the shapechanger subtype (such as a lycanthrope or doppelganger) can revert to its natural form as a standard action.

Spells that Have Come Before

For the purpose of adjudicating effects that apply to polymorph spells, any spell whose effect is based on either *alter self* or *polymorph* should be considered to have the polymorph subschool. However, the spells' existing rules text takes priority over that of the subschool. *Alter self,* for instance, does not change the target's ability scores (unlike normal for spells of the polymorph subschool).

SWIFT AND IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

Many feats, skill tricks, and spells presented in this book use two new kinds of actions: the swift and immediate action, originally introduced in *Miniatures Handbook* and *Expanded Psionics Handbook*, respectively.

Swift Action: A swift action consumes a very small amount of time, but represents a larger expenditure of effort and energy than a free action. You can perform one swift action per turn without affecting your ability to perform other actions. In that regard, a swift action is like a free action. However, you can perform only a single swift action per turn, regardless of what other actions you take. You can take a swift action any time you would normally be allowed to take a free action.

Casting a quickened spell or manifesting a quickened power is a swift action. In addition, casting any spell or manifesting any power with a casting time or manifesting time of 1 swift action is a swift action.

Immediate Action: Much like a swift action, an immediate action consumes a very small amount of time, but represents a larger expenditure of effort and energy than a free action. Unlike a swift action, an immediate action can be performed at any time—even it it's not your turn. Using an immediate action on your turn is the same as using a swift action, and counts as your swift action for that turn. You cannot use another immediate action or a swift action until after your next turn if you have used an immediate action when it is not currently your turn (effectively, using an immediate action before your turn is equivalent to using your swift action for the coming turn). You also cannot use an immediate action if you are currently flat-footed.

NEW ASSASSIN SPELLS

1st Level

Healer's Vision: Gain +5 bonus on Heal checks, and +2 attack and damage on sneak attacks.

Mimicry: Perfectly mimic familiar sounds, voices, or accents.

THEFT REPORT

To Lord Kikosomi, Head of the Royal Guard:

My lord, I have terrible news to report. Four of the five crown jewels have been stolen. The thieves must have employed magic of some sort, for the fields of alarm wards remain undisturbed. None of the guards saw anyone enter or leave. Our mages have confirmed this with multiple spells of the appropriate kind.

As best I can ascertain, the thieves (I refer to the culprits in the plural because I do not believe a single being could have gotten past all our defenses) brought with them a spellcaster of some kind. They must also have included someone able to contort himself in such a way as to slip through the bars surrounding the jewels, since the zone of antimagic that encompasses them yet remains. (It is remotely possible that the thieves somehow lowered the zone of antimagic, then raised another in its place.)

I think one of the thieves might have had a blade made of a rare material known as adamantine, which I understand can penetrate most materials with ease. That would explain the cleanly cut hole in the outside wall of the room. I can think of no other solution that does not involve magic—and, as I mentioned, the zone of antimagic still holds.

I pray to St. Cuthbert that we might yet find the culprits.

Sincerely,
Hetlan Croft, Royal Guard Inquisitor

2nd Level

Smoke Stairs: Walk up a column of smoke as if it were solid.

3rd Level

Create Fetch: Craft a temporary duplicate of yourself that follows telepathic orders.

4th Level

Assassin's Darkness: Globe of pure darkness blocks all sight but your own.

NEW BARD SPELLS

1st Level

Armor Lock: Target's armor becomes restrictive, slowing movement to 10 ft.
Lucky Streak: Target gains +2 luck bonus on rerolls made with luck feats.
Mage Burr: Double arcane spell failure chance for target's armor.
Mimicry: Perfectly mimic familiar sounds, voices, or accents.

2nd Level

Animate Instrument: Your instrument animates and plays by itself.
Catapult: Magically propel an object from your hand.
Opportune Dodge: Subject can avoid a single attack of opportunity.
Spymaster's Coin: Hide a scrying sensor in a coin or other Tiny object for later activation.

Gimble uses the catapult spell to launch a dagger at an unsuspecting target

3rd Level

Disobedience: Subject is shielded from mind control.
Create Fetch: Craft a temporary duplicate of yourself that follows telepathic orders.

4th Level

Spell Theft: Dispel spells on target and gain their benefit for yourself.

5th Level

Evacuation Rune: Create invisible rune that you can teleport to as swift action.
Harmonic Void: Nearby casters must succeed on Concentration check to use verbal-component spells.
Scry Location: Spy on a distant location.

NEW CLERIC SPELLS

1st Level

Healer's Vision: Gain +5 bonus on Heal checks, and +2 attack and damage on sneak attacks.

2nd Level

Manifestation of the Deity: Create illusion of your deity, rendering enemies shaken for 1 round.

5th Level

Scry Location: Spy on a distant location.

NEW DRUID SPELLS

1st Level

Aquatic Escape: Take the form of a fish.
Blockade: Fill 5-ft. square with enormous block of wood.
Spore Field: Mushrooms grow from ground, slowing movement and sickening living creatures.
Winged Watcher: Take the form of a bird.

2nd Level

Smoke Stairs: Walk up a column of smoke as if it were solid.

3rd Level

Wall of Vermin: Wall of biting pests provides concealment, attacks anyone passing through.

7th Level

Scry Location: Spy on a distant location.

Illus. by E. Deschamps

NEW HEXBLADE SPELLS

1st Level

Armor Lock: Target's armor becomes restrictive, slowing movement to 10 ft.

Mage Burr: Double arcane spell failure chance for target's armor.

4th Level

Spell Theft: Dispel spells on target and gain their benefit for yourself.

NEW RANGER SPELLS

1st Level

Blockade: Fill 5-ft. square with enormous block of wood.

2nd Level

Spore Field: Mushrooms grow from ground, slowing movement and sickening living creatures.

NEW SORCERER/WIZARD SPELLS

1st Level

Conj **Blockade:** Fill 5-ft. square with enormous block of wood.

Trans **Armor Lock:** Target's armor becomes restrictive, slowing movement to 10 ft.

Mage Burr: Double arcane spell failure chance for target's armor.

2nd Level

Div **Spymaster's Coin:** Hide a scrying sensor in a coin or other Tiny object for later activation.

Evoc **Fatal Flame:** Target's body bursts into flame upon its death.

Trans **Catapult:** Magically propel an object from your hand.

Enlarge Weapon: Your weapon grows one size category.

Lucky Streak: Subject gains +2 luck bonus on rerolls made with luck feats.

3rd Level

Abjur **Disobedience:** Subject is shielded from mind control.

Conj **Grasping Wall:** Wall sprouts hands that entangle enemies, help allies climb.

Trans **Wand Modulation:** Temporarily change wand to cast another, weaker spell.

Siphon: Drain 5 or more charges from wand or staff to replace one or more cast spells.

4th Level

Conj **Create Fetch:** Craft a temporary duplicate of yourself that follows telepathic orders.

5th Level

Conj **Evacuation Rune:** Create invisible rune that you can teleport to as swift action.

Abjur **Spell Theft:** Dispel spells on target and gain their benefit for yourself.

6th Level

Div **Scry Location:** Spy on a distant location.

SPELL DESCRIPTIONS

ANIMATE INSTRUMENT

Transmutation
Level: Bard 2
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: Instrument touched
Duration: 1 minute/level
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

As you finish intoning this chant, your instrument leaves your hands and floats before you, continuing your song.

You imbue your musical instrument with the ability to play at your command. This instrument can play a tune on your behalf even while you are busy with other actions. As long as this spell is in effect, you can cause the instrument to begin playing as a swift action, effectively mimicking and continuing your performance. The instrument uses your Perform modifier for the purpose of bardic music checks.

Once the animated instrument picks up the performance, you do not have to concentrate to maintain its effect. Thus, you can continue a performance or bardic music effect that relies on the use of a musical instrument and also cast spells, activate magic items by spell completion or command words, or even use another bardic music ability.

You can animate any nonmagical musical instrument, such as a piano, fiddle, or harp. If the instrument must be carried or held while played, it floats in the air in the square in which you cast the spell. The animated instrument cannot move. It continues to play until the spell expires or the instrument is damaged. An animated instrument's AC is 10 + any relevant size modifiers; most handheld instruments are Tiny.

Material Component: One working musical instrument.

AQUATIC ESCAPE

Transmutation (Polymorph)
Level: Druid 1
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 swift action
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 1 round/level (D)

Your arms and legs fuse with your body as bright silvery scales cover your skin.

You take the form of a Diminutive fish. Use the statistics for the toad (*MM* 282) except for the following changes: Add the aquatic subtype, replace the land speed with a swim speed of 30 feet, remove the amphibious special quality, and replace the toad's skills with Listen +4, Spot +4, and Swim +13. A fish adds its Dexterity modifier, not its Strength modifier, to Swim checks, and gains a +8 racial bonus on Swim checks due to its swim speed. See the polymorph subschool description on page 91 for more details.

As its name suggests, this spell's most common use is to make a quick getaway in a watery environment, but it also allows a clever druid to overcome a flooded corridor or similar obstacle.

ARMOR LOCK

Transmutation
Level: Bard 1, hexblade 1, sorcerer/wizard 1
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: One creature wearing armor
Duration: 1 round/level (D)
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

The plates and joints of your opponent's armor become as rigid as stone, encumbering his movement.

You cause the target's armor to swell and stiffen, slowing the wearer's movement and trapping him within. The target's land speed is reduced to 10 feet. If the target has a burrow, climb, or swim speed, these are also reduced to 10 feet. The target also loses any Dexterity bonus to AC for the duration of the spell.

While affected by this spell, the target cannot remove his armor; its joints are too tight and restrictive to escape from. This spell has no effect on unarmored opponents, creatures with only natural armor or an AC bonus from items other than armor, or those using only shields.

ASSASSIN'S DARKNESS

Evocation (Darkness)
Level: Assassin 4
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Area: 40-ft.-radius spherical emanation
Duration: 1 minute/level (D)
Saving Throw: No
Spell Resistance: No

Covering your eyes and spitting a harsh whisper, you conjure a globe of absolute blackness before you. As you step forward, your sight alone pierces the darkness, showing you your disoriented victims within.

You call a globe of absolute darkness into being, which only you can see through. All other creatures within or who enter this spell's area are blinded while they remain in the area. Even creatures that have darkvision cannot see through this magical obscurement, although creatures capable of seeing in magical darkness (such as devils) are not affected by it.

While you are outside the sphere, you can see nothing within, and every creature within has total concealment. Upon entering the spell's area, however, you can see as if the area were illuminated by bright light and can interact with those within as normal, even though they cannot see you.

BLOCKADE

Conjuration (Creation)
Level: Druid 1, ranger 1, sorcerer/wizard 1
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 swift action
Range: 0 ft.
Effect: 5-ft. cube of wood
Duration: 3 rounds
Saving Throw: No
Spell Resistance: None

You drop a tiny wooden block before you. It rapidly begins growing and hits the ground with a heavy thud, now a perfect 5-foot cube of dense wood.

You call a cube of solid wood, 5 feet on a side, into being. The cube must be created upon solid ground in an empty square. If no solid surface exists that is large enough for the cube to fit on, or if no adjacent square is empty, the spell fails.

The cube weighs 2,000 pounds. It has a hardness of 5 and 600 hit points, and it completely fills one 5-foot square. Multiple cubes can be stacked. If it is pushed into water, the cube floats.

Material Component: A block of wood, less than 3 inches on a side.

CATAPULT

Transmutation
Level: Bard 2, sorcerer/wizard 2
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: One held object, weighing up to 5 lb.
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: No
Spell Resistance: None

Focusing on the object in your grasp, you abruptly jerk your head in the direction you desire, sending the item flying.

You propel a single object out of your hand at fantastic speed. This object can be a weapon designed for throwing, a weapon not meant to be thrown, or another nonliving object.

Make a normal ranged attack roll with the affected object, but do not add any ability score modifier to the attack or damage roll. Instead, you gain a competence bonus on the damage roll equal to one-third of your caster level (maximum +5). The range increment for the hurled object is 30 feet, regardless of its normal range increment (if any).

If you use *catapult* to fling an object not meant to be used as a thrown weapon, you take the normal –4 nonproficiency penalty on the attack roll. An item that isn't a weapon deals 1d6 points of base damage if it weighs at least 1 pound.

The item *catapult* is to affect must be in your hands when you cast the spell. If you cast the spell with nothing in your hands to fling, the magic automatically fails. You cannot propel living creatures with *catapult*, regardless of their size.

CREATE FETCH

Conjuration (Creation)
Level: Assassin 3, bard 3, sorcerer/wizard 4
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Effect: A duplicate of yourself
Duration: 10 minutes/level
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

Plucking out one of your own hairs, you make a beckoning motion. A double of you appears nearby.

You create a fetch, a perfect replica of your form at the time you cast this spell. Little more than an animated reproduction, a fetch is mindless but capable of performing simple tasks or imitating you. The creation is the same size as you and occupies space just as a living creature does. You have a mental connection with your fetch and can give it new orders as a standard action.

A fetch duplicates the caster's appearance in every way

The fetch duplicates your form in every way but texture. You must make a Disguise check when you cast the spell to determine how good the likeness is; this result is opposed by observers' Spot checks as normal. Anyone touching the fetch finds it rubbery and soft, and in so doing immediately realizes its magical nature. The fetch's body includes useless versions of all the equipment you possess: A weapon wielded by the fetch is too flimsy to deal damage, and tools it carries are fragile and imprecise. Items created with a fetch are part of its form and dissipate if separated from it.

At your order, the fetch can retrieve things for you, open unstuck doors, hold chairs, and the like, as well as perform menial tasks such as cleaning and mending. The fetch can't perform any task that requires a skill check with a DC higher than 10 or that requires a skill that can't be used untrained. It can perform only one activity at a time, but it repeats the same activity tirelessly if ordered to do so as long as you remain within the spell's range. You can have the fetch imitate you, such as by sitting at a desk and pretending to write, lying in bed and breathing deeply, or skulking with a weapon drawn. It can even imitate tasks it can't actually perform, though it automatically fails any attempt at such performance—for instance, even though a fetch can pretend to decipher an ancient text, it can't actually do it.

The fetch weighs roughly the same as you do, so it can trigger any traps you would if you were to pass through the same space, setting off tripwires, pressure plates, some magical forms of detection, and similar devices. Its land speed is normal for a creature of your kind (for example, 30 feet for a human or 20 feet for a halfling). Even if you normally have other modes of movement available (such as a fly or swim speed), the fetch can't use those.

The fetch automatically fails any saving throw required of it. If you attempt to send it beyond the spell's range (measured from your current position), it ceases to exist.

Illus. by R. Gallegos

The fetch has an effective Strength score of 6, so it can lift 60 pounds or drag 300 pounds. Its Dexterity is 10, so it has an AC of 10 (plus size modifier). It gains no AC benefit from any equipment or effect on you when the spell is cast (such as armor you wear, since the armor created for it is part of its form), though it can then wear real armor or other items to increase its Armor Class. It has no Constitution score and 10 hit points; if reduced to 0 hit points, it is destroyed. It can't be healed, nor can it benefit from temporary hit points. The fetch has no Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma score. You can command it to make noise, but it can't communicate in any way, nor can it understand instructions other than the simple orders you give it telepathically.

The fetch cannot attack in any way; it is never allowed an attack roll. Even if armed, it doesn't threaten an area around it and thus can't flank an enemy, nor can it use the aid another action to improve your Armor Class or attack rolls.

The fetch has the same alignment aura as you do. *Detect thoughts* does not register its existence (since it has no Intelligence), but *detect magic* reveals it as a magical effect.

Material Component: One of your own hairs.

DISOBEDIENCE

Abjuration
Level: Bard 3, sorcerer/wizard 3
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: One creature
Duration: 1 hour/level (D)
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless); see text
Spell Resistance: Yes

Disobedience shields a scoundrel from an illithid's attempt at control

A ghostly great helm that only you can see appears around your companion's head, warding her mind against control.

You shield your subject against mind-controlling spells and abilities. *Disobedience* blocks any attempt to exercise mental control over the subject creature, including charm and compulsion effects that grant ongoing control over the subject, such as *dominate person* or a vampire's dominate ability. The protection does not prevent such effects from targeting a subject affected by *disobedience*, but it suppresses the effect for the duration of this spell. If *disobedience* ends before the effect granting mental control does, the would-be controller becomes able to mentally command the targeted creature.

In addition to protecting the subject, *disobedience* sends false information to the creature that is attempting to gain control of the subject. The would-be controller must succeed on a Will save or believe that its spell or ability has taken effect and that the target is now under its control. The spell's subject becomes aware of commands issued by that creature and can choose to act however she pleases, disregarding the would-be controller's orders or going along with them in a pretense of obedience.

Material Component: A scrap of tin.

ENLARGE WEAPON

Transmutation
Level: Sorcerer/wizard 2
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: One touched melee weapon
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless, object)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless, object)

With a shriek of warping wood and scraping metal, your weapon grows, becoming far more intimidating.

A melee weapon you hold enlarges by one size category (Small weapons become Medium, Medium weapons become Large, and so on). As its size increases, the damage the weapon deals increases as well (PH 114). When your weapon is affected by this spell, you do not take a penalty for wielding an inappropriately sized weapon. If you drop the enlarged weapon, are disarmed, or hand the weapon to another creature, the spell ends. This spell does not grant you the ability to wield any other inappropriately sized weapon without

Illus. by K. Tanner

Illus. by E. Widermann

This enlarged spear makes a nasty surprise for a minotaur

penalty, only the one on which this spell is cast.

This spell has no effect on a weapon that is already increased in size by some other effect (such as being held by a creature affected by *enlarge person*).

EVACUATION RUNE

Conjuration (Teleportation)
Level: Bard 5, sorcerer/wizard 5
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Effect: One invisible rune
Duration: 24 hours
Saving Throw: None (harmless)
Spell Resistance: No (harmless)

As you finish scribing this bloody rune, the mark flares for an instant and then vanishes. Even though the rune has disappeared, you feel as though you can step back to it simply by willing it.

You create a magical mark that you can teleport to at a moment's notice. Upon casting this spell and touching a surface or inanimate object, you create an invisible rune like that created by the spell *arcane mark* (*PH* 201). At any point during the spell's duration you can teleport (as the *greater teleport* spell) back to the mark as a swift action. This ends the spell's duration. After teleporting in this way, you can't take any other actions until your next turn.

The mark created by this spell can be detected in the same ways that an invisible *arcane mark* can be. You are not alerted if the mark is dispelled or the object upon which it is inscribed is destroyed. Any attempt to teleport back to a dispelled or destroyed mark still requires a swift action but fails.

If you created the *evacuation rune* upon a portable object, that object can be moved by another creature. You have no knowledge of whether your mark has been moved or where, and upon teleporting to its location, you are subject to any adverse conditions. If the mark has been moved to another plane, any attempt to teleport to it fails.

If the object inscribed with the *evacuation rune* is moved somewhere too small for you to appear or is otherwise covered by a solid body, you take 1d6 points of damage and are shunted to a random open space on a suitable surface within 100 feet of the intended location. If there is no free space within 100 feet, you take an additional 2d6 points of damage and are shunted to a free space within 1,000 feet. If there is no free space within 1,000 feet, you take an additional 4d6 points of damage, and the teleport attempt simply fails.

Material Component: The blood of an owl, hawk, or eagle.

FATAL FLAME

Evocation (Fire)
Level: Sorcerer/wizard 2
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: One living creature with 1 or more HD
Duration: 1 minute/level
Saving Throw: Will negates, Reflex half; see text
Spell Resistance: Yes

A single spark of flame leaps from your finger into the target's body, waiting silently for its death.

You place a tiny quantity of pure elemental fire within a creature, which interacts with the energy released by its death to create a small explosion. When the target creature is killed, its body explodes in a burst of flame, dealing fire damage to each adjacent creature equal to twice the target's HD or twice your caster level, whichever is less (maximum 20 points). Treat creatures with less than 1 HD as having 1/2 HD for the purpose of this spell's effect (so the spell deals 1 point of fire damage when triggered). A successful Reflex save halves this damage. *Fatal flame* has no ill effect on the target's body before its death.

The target receives a Will save to negate the spell's effect.

Material Component: A splinter of charred bone.

GRASPING WALL

Conjuration (Creation)
Level: Sorcerer/wizard 3
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Effect: Hands sprout from a wall in an area of up to four 5-ft. squares (S)
Duration: Concentration (max. 1 round/level) + 3 rounds
Saving Throw: Reflex negates
Spell Resistance: No

Hundreds of disembodied hands burst from the wall, forming a sea of clutching, probing appendages.

You cause hands to sprout from a wall within range. This spell simply adds grasping hands to an existing wall rather than creating a wall of a substance.

All opponents adjacent to the wall are entangled unless they succeed on Reflex saves. An opponent must repeat this save each round it remains adjacent to the wall.

Allied creatures are not entangled, and in fact can use the hands to gain a +10 competence bonus on Climb checks to scale the wall. If the spell ends while you are climbing, you immediately fall but can make a normal Climb check to catch yourself (*PH* 69).

Any objects on a wall affected by the spell are unharmed; doors, windows, and other apertures in the wall can be opened or closed as normal.

Material Component: A handful of fingernails.

HARMONIC VOID

Abjuration
Level: Bard 5
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: 60 ft.
Area: 60-ft.-radius spherical emanation, centered on you
Duration: Concentration, up to 1 round/level
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

Jarring, discordant noises fill the area, making it difficult for others to concentrate.

Illus. by F. Vobwinkel

Fatal flame turns a dying kobold into a lethal booby trap for its fellows

You create a zone of disruptive arcane harmonies that interfere with spells that have verbal components. Casters within the area find their spells' spoken words warped, twisted, and blurred, disrupting their efforts. Any creature (other than you) that attempts to cast a spell with a verbal component in this area must succeed on a Concentration check (DC 20 + the spell's level). On a failure, the spell fails to function and the caster expends the spell or spell slot as normal.

Harmonic void has no effect on supernatural abilities, magic items, and other magical effects. It affects only spells with verbal components.

HEALER'S VISION

Divination
Level: Assassin 1, cleric 1
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 1 round/level (D)

Every thrumming vein, every strained muscle, and every pulsing organ of those nearby becomes visible to your eyes, showing you exactly where to place a healing hand . . . or a deadly strike.

You gain a macabre change to your vision that seemingly peels away skin and sinew to reveal the flesh beneath. You gain a +5 insight bonus on Heal checks, and any *cure* spell you cast on a living creature heals 1 extra point of damage per level of the spell.

You also gain a +2 bonus on attack rolls and damage rolls when making a precision-based attack (such as a sneak attack or a sudden strike) against a living creature, since you are able to pick out your target's most vital points. (This effect makes the spell popular among less benevolent casters.) *Healer's vision* does not grant you the ability to make a precision-based attack if you don't already have that ability, nor does it allow you to make such attacks against creatures normally unaffected by them.

This spell does not reveal the true forms of creatures affected by illusions or other magical disguises, so it grants no benefit to Heal checks or attacks against such creatures.

LUCKY STREAK

Transmutation
Level: Bard 1, sorcerer/wizard 2
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: One creature
Duration: 1 minute/level (D)
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

A tinkling laugh and a momentary shine surround your ally, leaving him with an aura of confidence and a sly smile.

You improve the luck of the subject creature. For the duration of the spell, any reroll the subject makes using a luck feat gains a +2 luck bonus.

MAGE BURR

Transmutation
Level: Bard 1, hexblade 1, sorcerer/wizard 1
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Illus. by E. Deschamps

Healer's vision reveals a fiend's vital spots

Target: One creature wearing armor or using a shield
Duration: 1 round/level (D)
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

Sharp ridges, split leather, and cracking patches of rust spread over your enemy's armor like an angry, irritating disease.

Jagged edges and rough surfaces break forth all over the target creature's armor and shield. These protrusions deal no damage and are little more than an uncomfortable annoyance. Arcane spellcasters, however, find the effect most distracting, incurring double the normal arcane spell failure chance for armor and shields. In addition, any creature affected by this spell takes a –5 penalty on Concentration checks. The check penalty does not worsen if an affected creature is both wearing armor and using a shield.

For example, a wizard wearing chainmail and carrying a light steel shield would normally have a 35% chance of arcane spell failure. That wizard, if targeted by this spell, would incur a 70% chance of arcane spell failure, as well as taking a –5 penalty on Concentration checks.

This spell has no effect on unarmored opponents or on creatures with only natural armor or an AC bonus from items other than armor.

MANIFESTATION OF THE DEITY

Illusion (Pattern) [Fear, Mind-Affecting]
Level: Cleric 2
Components: V, S, DF
Casting Time: 1 swift action
Range: Personal
Effect: An image of the deity you worship
Duration: 1 round/3 levels (D)
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: No

As you invoke the name of your deity, a towering, spectral image of the god appears above you, turning its wrath upon your foes.

You summon a looming illusion of the deity you worship, overlaid on your form. The divine manifestation appears ghostly and fearsome, with its favored weapon drawn, and makes threatening overtures (roaring, spouting scripture, making dreadful threats, and the like). The image is transparent enough that you receive no concealment.

Any enemy who can see the effect becomes shaken for 1 round. A successful Will save negates the effect, and that creature can no longer be affected by this casting of the spell. No creature can be affected more than once by the same casting of *manifestation of the deity.*

MIMICRY

Transmutation
Level: Assassin 1, bard 1
Components: V
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 1 minute/level

You feel a brief tingle in your throat. When you open your mouth, your voice is no longer your own.

You can perfectly mimic familiar sounds, voices, and accents. These sounds can be any that you've heard before, and must be within the range of noises your voice is capable of creating. For example, a normal human voice could recreate the roar of a lion—being roughly equivalent to a scream—or approximate the sound of shattering glass. It could not reproduce the rumble of a collapsing building or a high-pitched noise audible only to bats. This spell does not allow you to speak languages you can't normally speak.

You can duplicate a specific individual's voice by making a Bluff check; a listener familiar with the voice being imitated must succeed on an opposed Sense Motive check to discern that the voice is not genuine.

OPPORTUNE DODGE

Abjuration
Level: Bard 2
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 swift action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

Uttering a rapid series of words and reaching out your hand, you surround your comrade with a thin, blurry haze.

Any time the subject of this spell might provoke attacks of opportunity, he can choose to activate this spell's effect (this does not require an action). Upon doing so, he contorts or moves so swiftly as to deny one opponent one attack of opportunity. Because the opponent never makes its attack of opportunity, its total number of attacks of opportunity per round is not reduced.

Once the subject negates an attack of opportunity in this way, the spell ends. It is possible for the subject to provoke an attack of opportunity, activate this spell's effect to cancel it, and then provoke and be susceptible to another attack of opportunity in the same round.

The subject does not have to activate the spell's effect to negate the first attack of opportunity he provokes but can save the effect until he chooses to use it or the duration ends.

SCRY LOCATION

Divination (Scrying)
Level: Bard 5, cleric 7, druid 7, sorcerer/wizard 6
Components: V, S, M/DF, F
Casting Time: 1 hour
Range: See text
Effect: Magical sensor
Duration: 1 minute/level
Saving Throw: No
Spell Resistance: No

At the culmination of this long ritual, you gaze into your scrying focus and stretch out your sight. The mists within the reflective surface dissipate, and suddenly you can see and hear a familiar place.

You can see and hear what occurs at a location, which can be at any distance on the same plane where you are located. You must make a successful caster level check (1d20 + your caster level) to scry a specific location. The difficulty of this check depends on how familiar you are with that location and what sort of physical connection (if any) you have to that place. Furthermore, the difficulty to scry the desired locale increases if the location is extremely far removed, indoors or underground, or on another plane. The DC of this check is 20 + any modifiers related to your knowledge of the area, your connection to it, and the location's distance, as set out in the following table. If you fail this check, the scrying attempt simply fails.

If the caster level check succeeds, you create an invisible magical sensor in any location you desire. Through this sensor you can both see and hear, your vantage and range of vision being the same as if you were actually at that place, allowing you to make Spot and Listen checks as normal. You can rotate the sensor as you wish, seeing in any direction you desire. Once the spell is cast, however, you cannot change the position of the sensor.

As with all divination (scrying) spells, the sensor has your full visual acuity, including any magical effects. In addition, the following spells have a 5% chance per caster level of operating through the sensor: *detect chaos*, *detect evil*, *detect good*, *detect law*, *detect magic*, and *message*.

If the caster level check fails, you can't attempt to scry on any place within 1 mile of that location until 24 hours have passed.

Arcane Material Component: The eye of a mole, a badger, or a xorn, plus nitric acid, copper, and zinc.

Wizard, Sorcerer, or Bard Focus: A mirror of finely wrought and highly polished silver costing not less than 1,000 gp. The mirror must be at least 2 feet by 4 feet.

Cleric Focus: A holy water font costing not less than 100 gp.

Druid Focus: A natural pool of water.

Knowledge	Caster Level Check DC Modifier
None[1]	+10
Secondhand (you have heard of the location)	+5
Firsthand (you have been to the location)	+0
Familiar (you have been to the location often)	–5

1 You must have some sort of connection to a location you have no knowledge of.

Location	Caster Level Check DC Modifier
Per 1,000 miles away	+2
Indoors or underground	+2
On another plane	+10

Connection	Caster Level Check DC Modifier
Likeness or picture	–2
An object that has been in the location for a week or more[2]	–4
A plant, mineral, or other object taken from the area[2]	–10

2 The object must have been in the location within the past year.

SIPHON

Transmutation
Level: Sorcerer/wizard 3
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 minute
Range: Touch
Target: One touched wand or staff
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

You leach the power of the wand you hold, causing a ghostly stream of blue mist to rise from the item and enter

DUPED

"Only critters more greedy 'n misers are dragons. Fact, I think I heard once that 'miser' is Elven for 'dragon,' but I don't know.

"Anyhow, the most miserly dragon as ever I seen were the great green, Morxmordrex. 'E loved his gold and his gems like any dragon, but his favorite were a cup o' platinum he just adored. So I sets me eyes on winning that wee cup fer meself.

"In 'is sleepin' time I sneaks in and starts movin' bits o' his hoard into little tunnels. I don't take nothin', and in fact I leave a few extra coins and gems layin' about within. Then I waits for 'im to wake up and find 'is hoard much reduced. 'E gets a mite upset, and goes rampagin' through the forest. When he calms down, I walks up to him and says, 'I been hearin' yer bellerin' and wonder what might make ye so mad.' So 'e says, 'Some thief stole me hoard. Were it ye?' I says no but that I'll help 'im look for it.

"Now 'e don't trust me rightly, but 'e's desperate and wants his treasures back. So I start by lookin' fer tracks, 'cuz I tells 'im I'm a ranger—me! A dwarf! But 'e believes me, so I pretends to look. Near the end o' the day 'e starts gettin' mad, so I 'finds' the loot down in a deep shaft. 'E can't reach down in to grab more'n a few coins, so I offers to go in—fer a price. Now, Morxmordrex ain't too happy 'bout that, but 'e says I can have one piece o' 'is hoard. I says the cup.

"Fer a moment I thought 'e was gonna eat me right there, but 'e just raged and bellered a bit afore 'e agreed. Two hours later I 'ad me that wee cup and 'e 'ad him back 'is precious hoard."

your body. Slowly, you feel your magical energies being renewed.

You drain the charges from a wand or staff you hold to replace spells you have already cast. As long as the wand or staff has at least 5 charges left, you can expend 5 of those charges to replace a cast spell. The spell replaced must be of a level equal to or lower than the highest-level spell the staff or wand holds. If you prepare arcane spells, you can regain any one spell of the affected level that you have already cast that day; if you cast spells spontaneously, you can regain a spell slot of the appropriate level. For example, a wizard who has cast her only *fly* spell for the day (a 3rd-level spell) can drain 5 charges from her *wand of fireball* (another 3rd-level spell) to regain *fly* or any lower-level spell she has cast.

If the wand or staff holds enough charges, one casting of this spell can replace multiple spells at once. For example, a sorcerer who has expended three of his 5th-level spell slots can drain 15 charges from his *staff of frost* to regain all three spell slots.

Siphon has no effect on wands or staffs that do not hold enough charges to replenish the desired number of spells.

An assassin uses smoke stairs to make his escape

SMOKE STAIRS

Transmutation [Air]

Level: Assassin 2, druid 2

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: 1 minute/level

You step into intangible smoke and ascend as nimbly as if it were a flight of steps.

You gain the ability to run up columns of smoke as if they were normal stairs. Casting this spell successfully requires smoke from a natural fire large enough to fill a 5-foot square, such as a normal campfire, bonfire, or any significant amount of burning debris (torch flames or creatures made of fire or smoke do not suffice).

After casting this spell, you can move into the column of smoke produced by such fires and can ascend vertically into a square filled with smoke. To your eyes the smoke coalesces into ghostly steps, though other observers see nothing different. When stepping into the column you are considered to be in the smoke above the flame and take no damage from the fire. Every 5 feet of upward movement costs 2 squares of movement. For example, an assassin with a speed of 30 feet casts *smoke stairs* on himself, then moves 10 feet across the ground to a smoking fire and

Illus. by M. Coimbra

ascends 10 feet vertically in a single move action.

If anything dissipates the column of smoke while you are moving though it using this spell, you lose your footing and fall. Examples include a *gust of wind* spell and an air elemental's whirlwind form. If the fire creating the smoke is extinguished, the *smoke stairs* effect lingers for 1 round before dispersing.

Material Component: A handful of dried leaves.

SPELL THEFT

Abjuration
Level: Bard 4, hexblade 4, sorcerer/wizard 5
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: One creature
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

Winding your magical grip around the dweomers that augment your opponent, you rip them away and feel their energy rise around you.

You attempt to steal an opponent's beneficial spell effects for yourself. Upon casting this spell, you instantly discern all spells currently affecting the target (including their effects). For each spell so discerned, you can make a dispel check (1d20 + your caster level, maximum +15) against a DC of 11 + the spell's caster level. If the check succeeds, you gain the effect of the spell for the remainder of its duration, as if it had been cast on you instead of the original target, and the opponent loses that effect.

Only spells capable of being dispelled can be affected by *spell theft*. In addition, if you are not a legal target of the spell to be stolen, your dispel check automatically fails. For example, if you cast *spell theft* on a dire bear affected by *bull's strength* and *animal growth*, you could steal only the effect of the first spell unless you were also of the animal type.

SPORE FIELD

Transmutation
Level: Druid 1, ranger 2
Components: V, S, DF
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Area: 10-ft.-radius spread
Duration: 1 minute/level
Saving Throw: Fortitude partial; see text
Spell Resistance: No

The ground at which you point erupts with countless puffball mushrooms.

You cause the ground to become thick with spore-ridden fungus. The area affected by this spell becomes difficult terrain. Entering a square of difficult terrain costs 2 squares of movement, and creatures cannot charge or run through such squares (*PH* 148). The uneven surface created by this spell also increases the DCs of Balance and Tumble checks by 5 and the DC of Move Silently checks by 2.

In addition, any creature that enters a square affected by this spell bursts several mushrooms, causing their choking spores to fill the air. The spores render the creature sickened for 1 round (Fortitude negates). Treat the spore cloud as an inhaled poison for the purpose of bonuses on the save or immunity to poison. Entering more than one affected square during a turn doesn't force multiple saves.

You can cast *spore field* on any type of ground or flooring, regardless of the material that comprises it.

SPYMASTER'S COIN

Divination (Scrying)
Level: Bard 2, sorcerer/wizard 2
Components: V, S, F
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Effect: Magical sensor
Duration: 1 hour/level or until triggered, then 1 round/level
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

You slide your finger over a coin, imbuing it with a tiny fraction of your own senses.

You imbue a Fine object (such as a coin, stone, or other innocuous item) with a dormant magical scrying sensor. Anyone attempting to detect its magical aura must succeed on a caster level check (DC 15 + your caster level).

At any one time during the spell's duration, as a standard action you can concentrate upon the object, enabling you to hear or see (your choice) as if you were in the object's location. This effect otherwise functions as if you had cast *clairaudience/clairvoyance* in the object's area. You have no control over the object's movement and gain no special senses. *Spymaster's coin* functions only on the plane of existence you are currently occupying.

You must continue to concentrate to see or hear through the *spymaster's coin*. If you stop concentrating, the spell's effect ends. Once activated, the scrying effect of the spell lasts for a maximum number of rounds equal to your caster level.

Focus: One object of Fine size.

WALL OF VERMIN

Conjuration (Creation)
Level: Druid 3
Components: V, S, DF
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Effect: Wall of pests whose area is up to four 5-ft. squares (S)
Duration: Concentration + 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Fortitude partial; see text
Spell Resistance: Yes

Exuding the stench of festering carrion, waves upon waves of buzzing, clambering, clicking bugs roil up from beneath the earth.

You cause a thick but porous wall, alive with hungry bugs, to buzz and scuttle into existence. It provides concealment in both directions, imposing a 20% miss chance on any attacks passing through it. You cannot conjure the wall so that it occupies the same space as a creature.

Any living creature passing through the wall is subjected to hundreds of tiny bites. It takes 2d6 points of damage and must succeed on a Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1 round. Any creature becoming nauseated while moving through the wall can complete its move action, but cannot take a standard action in that round.

The *wall of vermin* is immune to weapon damage, though it can be affected by area spells and effects (such as *burning hands* or *cone of cold*). It has 20 hit points and automatically fails any save. *Disintegrate* has no effect on a *wall of vermin*, since it is not a single physical object, though any wind of 50 mph or greater breaks it up for 1 round. Despite its appearance, a *wall of vermin* is not made up of natural creatures, and thus is unaffected by spells that affect animals or vermin.

WAND MODULATION

Transmutation
Level: Sorcerer/wizard 3
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 swift action
Range: Touch
Target: One touched wand
Duration: 1 minute/level (D)
Saving Throw: Yes (harmless, object)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless, object)

Manipulating the very magic that infuses your wand, you alter that energy, opening the magic item to a new power of your choosing.

By casting *wand modulation* on the target wand you hold, you temporarily alter it to cast a different spell. After casting this spell, the next spell you cast upon the target wand affects the remaining charges, allowing the wand to discharge that spell instead of the one it was created to cast.

The spell cast after *wand modulation* must be of a lower level than the spell the wand normally casts. Replacement spells cast from the affected wand are cast at the minimum caster level. Each use of an affected wand now expends 2 charges from the wand instead of the usual single charge. If the wand holds insufficient charges to invoke the new spell, it cannot be

A wall of vermin is a disgusting and effective deterrent

Illus. by E. Widermann

activated. You can't use *wand modulation* to change a wand's spell to one with a costly material component or focus or with an XP component, even if the original spell has a similar component or focus.

For example, a 5th-level wizard facing an angry fire elemental wishes to cast *magic missile* (a 1st-level spell) from his *wand of scorching ray* (a 2nd-level spell), which happens to have a caster level of 5th. He casts *wand modulation* and in the following round casts *magic missile*. The wand can now cast *magic missile* as a 1st-level caster (the minimum caster level), but each use expends 2 charges. The wizard can now use the wand to cast *magic missile* for 5 minutes, after which it reverts back to a normal *wand of scorching ray*.

WINGED WATCHER

Transmutation (Polymorph)
Level: Druid 1
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 swift action
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 1 round/level (D)

Your body hunches and shrinks as dusky feathers sprout from your skin. Your arms become wings and your toes sharpen into talons.

You take the form of an owl (*MM* 277) or raven (*MM* 278), as chosen when you cast the spell. Even though your Intelligence changes to 2, you retain your normal ability to understand your surroundings (unlike a normal animal). See the polymorph subschool description on page 91 for more details.

As its name suggests, this spell's most common use is for unobtrusive observation, but it also allows a druid to overcome obstacles that hinder overland travel.

Illus. by H. Lyon

With wand modulation, a wand's wielder can customize its stored spell energy

Illus. by D. Bircham

From the fighter and his longsword to the wizard with her array of material components, the right equipment helps everyone work better. Scoundrels are no different. This chapter presents a wide selection of gear both mundane and magical that scoundrels of all types can employ in their varied practices.

Equipment for scoundrels takes into account their distinctive needs, such as blending in and keeping themselves or objects in their possession hidden from the authorities. Many of the items presented in this chapter can keep a scoundrel out of a fight by concealing weapons, slaves, or contraband—even in the face of magical detection.

The chapter also includes a variety of alchemical items and magic items meant to give a scoundrel an edge when he needs it. New and interesting poisons have a wide range of specialized effects to help a scoundrel accomplish his goals without a lot of bloodshed.

Ever adaptable, scoundrels make use of whatever items are at hand. Sometimes those items aren't objects at all. Whether out of desperation or by design, scoundrels have discovered the usefulness of certain living creatures. This chapter concludes with descriptions of a few of the most common of these living items.

HIDDEN SPACES

Most scoundrels make a living through smuggling at some point in their careers. Those who specialize in covert transportation have developed a number of tricks, techniques, and items to help them in their profession. Such items are also useful to anyone who has something she doesn't want someone else to see—from greedy merchants attempting to avoid taxes to slavers trying to get their "goods" out of a nation. Most of the time, however, people hide their possessions for far less nefarious purposes, or even to avoid falling prey to nefarious activities. Hidden spaces are often used to store valuables or commodities, keeping the goods therein away from the prying eyes and nimble fingers of the local criminal element. Regardless of their uses or intent, these spaces exist in a variety of forms.

The size of a hidden space provides a rough indication of its volume and defines the largest object or creature that could reasonably be hidden within the space.

As a general rule, for the purpose of this discussion, objects held or worn by creatures are said to be of the same size as the creature in question. For example, a weapon or a piece of clothing sized for a Medium creature is a Medium object for the

sake of determining what size of hidden space can be built within it. In some cases, common sense will override this determination: A dagger wielded by a Medium creature, for instance, should be considered a Tiny object rather than a Medium or Small one.

A selection of typical hidden spaces is described below. Of course, variations on these themes are possible. The price given for each one is a rough estimate of the cost of incorporating the hidden space into the structure of an item, either before or after the item is manufactured.

Opening a hidden space requires a full-round action unless otherwise noted.

False Bottom: The classic hiding spot, a false bottom can be added to any container with a hard base, from a desk drawer to a chest to a barrel. A false bottom slightly reduces the amount of storage space the object otherwise would have. Gaining access to a false bottom typically requires emptying the container of the rest of its contents and locating and triggering a small latch that loosens the false bottom and allows it to be opened.

The maximum size of a false bottom is two sizes smaller than the container it is built into.

Price: 50 gp.

False Hold: Ships of all sizes and kinds frequently contain false holds. Even vessels that conduct otherwise lawful and legitimate business might contain hidden spaces.

The maximum size of a false hold in a ship is two sizes smaller than the ship itself. Most ships are Colossal, so they can have false holds of up to Huge size. A vessel without a hold (such as a rowboat) can have a hidden space added, but its maximum size is three sizes smaller than the vessel itself.

Price: 400 gp.

False Scabbard Tip: A scabbard can be fitted with a hollow space at its end that extends a few inches beyond the tip of the blade it holds. Access to a false scabbard tip typically requires depressing a button or a latch to unhook the tip from the sheath.

A quick-release mechanism, allowing access to the hidden space with only a move action, can be added to any false scabbard tip for an extra 100 gp.

A scabbard is typically the same size object as the weapon it holds, and a false scabbard tip has a capacity two size categories smaller than that. A dagger's scabbard, for example, could have a false tip of Fine size, while a greatsword's scabbard could be large enough to hold a Tiny object (such as a dagger).

Price: 10 gp.

Hidden Flap: Packs, sacks, bags, and satchels can contain cleverly concealed inner flaps or pockets.

The maximum size of the space contained beneath a hidden flap is two sizes smaller than the container it is built into.

Price: 1 gp.

Hollow Book: Another classic hidden space design, a hollow book has the covers and spine of a normal tome and blends in with other books on a shelf. Its pages, however, are glued together and their middles cut out (usually leaving a half-inch border of paper) to form a space. Unlike with most other hidden spaces, the maximum size of the space contained inside a hollow book is one size smaller than the book it is built into, since so much of the book's volume can be used.

Price: 5 gp.

Hollow Boot Heel: A hollow boot heel unscrews from a boot like a jar lid to reveal the hidden space inside.

The maximum size of the space contained within a hollow boot heel is four sizes smaller than the container it is built into. For example, boots made for a human (size Medium) can have hollow boot heels no larger than Fine size. An exception is that boots made for Small creatures can also have Fine-sized hollow heels.

Price: 20 gp.

Inside Pocket: This hidden space is simply an extra pocket sewn into the inner lining of a coat, tunic, robe, or pair of trousers. An inside pocket generally only holds a few sheets of paper, parchment, or similar items, but some are made to hold a potion or a dagger. A single piece of clothing can have up to two inside pockets.

A character with ranks in Sleight of Hand can substitute her Sleight of Hand check result for the normal Search DC when concealing objects in an inside pocket. She gains a +5 circumstance bonus on such checks.

The maximum size of the space contained within an inside pocket is two sizes smaller than the article of clothing it is built into. For example, a robe made for a human (size Medium) can have an inside pocket no larger than Tiny.

Price: 1 gp.

Lead Lining: In order to thwart the detection of a magic item it contains, a hidden space can be lined with a thin sheet of lead. Hard-sided objects can have thin lead sheets built into their walls, bottoms, and lids. Soft-sided objects, such as clothing, have threads of lead sewn into them. Either way, lead lining must be included with a hidden space when it is created, and cannot be added to an item later. Lead lining adds about 10% to the weight of an object in which it is incorporated.

Price: 10 gp.

Table 5–1, on the following page, describes various kinds of hidden spaces and provides the DC of the Search check to determine the existence or presence of such a space. This check is a full-round action, and it presumes that the searching character is either holding the item to be examined (in the case of a hollow boot heel, for example) or has unfettered access to the object into which the space has been built (for a false bottom or a false hold). By paying double the normal price, you can increase the indicated DC by 5; doubling the price

again (to four times the normal price) adds another 5, to a maximum DC increase of 10.

The Craft DC to manufacture a hidden space is equal to the Search DC to find it, and requires an appropriate Craft skill (such as woodworking for the false bottom of a chest or leatherworking for a hollow boot heel).

The figures in the Approximate Max Volume column are just that—approximations. All of the dimensions of a hidden space should be considered shapeable, so that (for instance) a Medium space could measure 3 × 1 × 9 feet and have the same volume as one that measures 3 feet on a side. Of course, the size and shape of the object into which the hidden space is built must also be taken into consideration.

Normally, hidden spaces are designed only to conceal objects. Spaces holding living creatures require extra care to avoid suffocation. Any such hidden space costs twice as much as normal and includes cleverly hidden airways.

Table 5–1: Hidden Spaces

Size	Search DC	Approximate Max Volume	Sample Hidden Object
Fine	25	2 × 2 × 2 in.	10 coins, sheet of paper (folded), shuriken
Diminutive	20	6 × 6 × 6 in.	Potion, amulet
Tiny	15	1 × 1 × 1 ft.	Book, flask of acid, light weapon
Small	15	2 × 2 × 2 ft.	One-handed weapon, backpack
Medium	15	3 × 3 × 3 ft.	Two-handed weapon, small barrel
Large	15	5 × 5 × 5 ft.	Small boat
Huge	15	10 × 10 × 10 ft.	Small wagon

SURPRISE WEAPONS

Scoundrels with a need for weaponry adopt the tricks and techniques of hidden spaces to more martial pursuits.

BAYONETS AND COMBINATION BLADES

Archers, crossbowmen, and others who rely on ranged weapons are at a distinct disadvantage when an enemy closes within melee range. In order to maximize survivability in such situations, many ranged specialists attach blades to their weapons. These blades, called bayonets, give ranged weapons melee capability.

A bayonet does not interfere with the normal functioning of the weapon to which it is fixed, so it can remain attached indefinitely. Bayonets act in all ways like normal melee weapons, as noted in their descriptions, and can be made masterwork or magic (separately from any masterwork or magic property of the main weapon). Attaching or removing a bayonet requires a move action. Attacking with a bayonet imposes a –2 penalty on the attack roll.

Bow Blade: Some archers add blades to the grips or risers of their weapons. Bowyers can craft bows that allow such blades to be permanently affixed. Treat a bow blade as a punching dagger.

Crossbow Bayonet: Bayonets easily fit onto light or heavy crossbows, attaching to the stock below where the bolt fires. Crossbow bayonets come in two kinds: knife and sword. A knife bayonet attached to a crossbow functions as a shortspear, while a sword bayonet attached to a crossbow is treated as a spear. A crossbow with an attached bayonet cannot be thrown as a true spear can be, though it can be set against a charge.

A hand crossbow is too small to accept a bayonet (but see hand crossbow blade, below).

Hand Crossbow Blade: Adding a short blade to the front of a hand crossbow allows you to defend yourself in melee combat without having to draw a different weapon. The blade functions as a dagger.

Table 5–2: Surprise Weapons

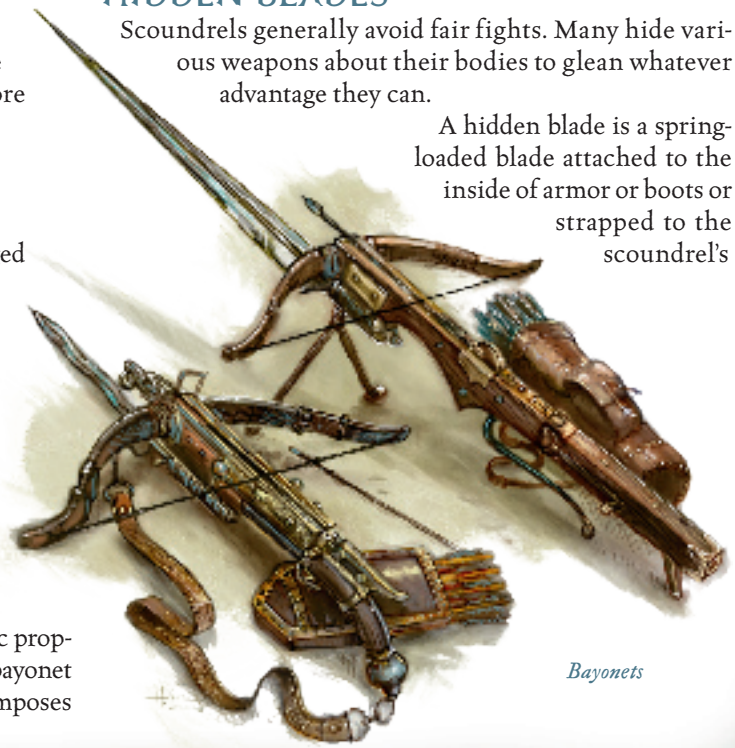
Weapon	Cost	Weight[1]
Bow blade	4 gp	1/2 lb.
Crossbow bayonet, knife	2 gp	1 lb.
Crossbow bayonet, sword	4 gp	2 lb.
Hand crossbow blade	4 gp	1/2 lb.
Boot blade	4 gp	1/2 lb.
Elbow blade	4 gp	1 lb.
Knee blade	20 gp	2 lb.
Sleeve blade	4 gp	1 lb.
Instrument blade	10 gp	1/2 lb.

1 Weight figures are for Medium weapons. A Small weapon weighs half as much, and a Large weapon weighs twice as much.

HIDDEN BLADES

Scoundrels generally avoid fair fights. Many hide various weapons about their bodies to glean whatever advantage they can.

A hidden blade is a spring-loaded blade attached to the inside of armor or boots or strapped to the scoundrel's



Bayonets

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body. Activating a hidden blade requires a move action. Hidden blades can be made masterwork or magic just as normal weapons can be. Attacking with a hidden blade imposes a –2 penalty on the attack roll.

Discovering a hidden blade before it has been activated requires a DC 15 Search check.

Boot Blade: The most common hidden blade, a boot blade is concealed in the sole of a boot, usually under the toes. The wearer activates the blade by striking a certain part of the boot (usually the toe) against the ground, which flips the weapon it into position. Treat a boot blade as a dagger.

Elbow Blade: Hidden within bracers or the forearm piece of a suit of armor, elbow blades jut out backward and lie flat against the back of the bearer's upper arm. Activating an elbow blade usually requires a flick or twist of the wrist. Treat an elbow blade as a punching dagger.

Knee Blade: Held within the greaves of a suit of armor, a knee blade extends with a quick upward thrust of the knee. The flat of the blade rests against the bearer's thigh, allowing for full range of movement. Treat a knee blade as a short sword.

Sleeve Blade: Strapped to the forearm of its wearer, a sleeve blade lies hidden under a long-sleeved shirt or dress. Making a quick downward flick with the wrist triggers the mechanism, extending the blade beyond the top of the wearer's hand. Treat a sleeve blade as a dagger.

Instrument Blade: Most stringed or wind instruments have a long, narrow section that can conceal a thin blade. Releasing a hidden catch allows the blade to spring forth. Such a blade functions as a dagger.

Any stringed instrument whose neck is designed to hide a blade includes reinforcing metal bars for added support.

ALCHEMICAL ITEMS

Researchers continually conduct experiments in the field of alchemy, ranging from wildly inventive gnome think-tanks to individual wizards locked away in their towers. This constant work occasionally produces items useful to adventurers and scoundrels alike.

Costs and Craft (alchemy) check DCs for creating these items appear in Table 5–3. All of these items have a negligible weight.

Clearwater Tablets: These small black pellets smell strongly of tar. Dropping a clearwater tablet into a gallon of water cleans the water of disease, poison, and other befouling toxins. Water so treated has a vaguely tarry smell and leaves a slimy black deposit on a surface it touches but is safe to drink. Magic liquids (such as potions, oils, and magic poisons) are immune to the effect of clearwater tablets. Liquids based on oil or alcohol are also not affected.

Daystrider Capsule: This bright blue gelatinous ovoid, when swallowed, allows a humanoid creature to walk for 10 hours in a day (instead of the normal 8 hours) before making a Constitution check to resist damage and fatigue. Walking longer than that entails making a forced march as normal (*PH* 164). Consuming a second daystrider capsule before 24 hours have passed has no further effect.

Ferrous Aqua: A pellet of ferrous aqua is a half-inch-diameter sphere of glass containing a rusty red liquid with small black flakes floating in suspension. A ferrous aqua pellet can be thrown as a ranged touch attack with a range increment of 5 feet. Alternatively, it can be loaded into a sling and used as a sling bullet. When it strikes a firm surface, the pellet bursts and sprays out the suspension within. Any creature with damage reduction that is overcome by cold iron takes 1d6 points of damage and is sickened for 1 round if struck by a ferrous aqua pellet (a successful DC 12 Fortitude save negates the sickened condition, but not the damage). Other creatures take no damage from a ferrous aqua pellet.

Forger's Paper: This normal-looking sheet of paper is infused with an alchemical substance that makes the sheet nearly transparent for 1 hour when exposed to heat. The now-clear sheet can be overlaid on a document to be copied, granting a +2 alchemical bonus on Forgery checks made while using it. Once the alchemical substance within it loses potency, the page becomes indistinguishable from a normal piece of paper (and can't be activated again by any means).

Endurance Elixir: Imbibing this chalky-tasting green liquid instantly acclimates a creature to its surroundings. For the next 12 hours, the drinker gains a +4 alchemical bonus on all ability checks, skill checks, and saving throws made to resist natural environmental extremes, such as hot or cold weather (*DMG* 302).

Liquid Sunlight: Shining with the light of a torch, a pellet of liquid sunlight is a half-inch-diameter sphere of glass that contains a gold-colored liquid. The pellet can be thrown as a ranged attack with a range increment of 5 feet. Alternatively, it can be loaded into a sling and used as a sling bullet. When it strikes a firm surface, it bursts and sprays out the liquid within. The liquid continues to glow with the light of a torch for 1 round after exposure to the air. Creatures with light sensitivity are dazzled for 1 round if struck by a liquid sunlight pellet. The pellet deals 1d6 points of damage to a vampire, vampire spawn, or any other creature similarly harmed by daylight.

Nerv: This is the street name for a substance also known as liquid courage, a gold-colored syrup in a clear glass bottle painted with interweaving blue and red swirls. Drinking a dose of nerv grants the drinker a +2 alchemical bonus on saves against fear effects for 1 hour.

Powdered Silver: This fine silvery dust sparkles when held in the light and is contained in a half-inch-diameter glass sphere. A powdered silver pellet can be thrown as

a ranged touch attack with a range increment of 5 feet. Alternatively, it can be loaded into a sling and used as a sling bullet. When it strikes a firm surface, the pellet bursts and sprays out the powder within. Any creature with damage reduction that is overcome by silvered weapons takes 1d6 points of damage and is sickened for 1 round if hit by a powdered silver pellet (a DC 12 Fortitude save negates the sickened condition, but not the damage). Other creatures take no damage from a powdered silver pellet.

Rust Cube: Made of rusty iron, rust cubes are sometimes disguised as dice. A rust cube can be thrown as a ranged attack with a range increment of 5 feet. Alternatively, it can be loaded into a sling and used as a sling stone. When it strikes a hard surface, the cube shatters into a fine powder of rusted iron. An object or creature made of metal that is hit by the rust cube immediately takes 1d6 points of damage (ignoring hardness), plus an additional 1d6 points of damage each round for the next 2 rounds. A creature can wipe the dust off with a move action.

Toxic Tooth: Since the invention of alchemical capsules (*Complete Adventurer* 119), researchers have continued to develop ever smaller delivery devices. The current peak of achievement comes in the form of the toxic tooth. Made to look identical to its wearer's actual teeth (including the addition of plaque, random filth, and gaping cavities if necessary), a toxic tooth can hold a single dose of a contact or inhaled poison.

To activate a toxic tooth, the wearer must bite down hard enough to crack it, then spit or exhale the poison at an adjacent creature. Doing so requires a standard action to make a ranged touch attack, but does not provoke attacks of opportunity. If the attack hits, the target is exposed to the poison and must save normally. Activating a toxic tooth also exposes its wearer to the poison.

Alchemical items provide a variety of benefits

Trail Bar: This tough, 4-inch-long bar of vegetable matter provides the equivalent of one day's worth of food. A creature that has consumed a bar (which takes about 10 minutes) receives all the nutritional and stomach-filling value of a full day's food—if none of the flavor. However, consuming a second trail bar before 24 hours have passed sickens the creature for 1 hour. Rangers and bounty hunters carry trail bars only if going into the wilds for long periods of time, and even then only reluctantly.

Table 5–3: Alchemical Items

Substance	Craft (alchemy) DC	Cost
Clearwater tablet	30	1 gp
Daystrider capsule	15	10 gp
Ferrous aqua	20	20 gp
Forger's paper	20	10 gp
Endurance elixir	20	25 gp
Liquid light	30	20 gp
Nerv	25	25 gp
Powdered silver	20	20 gp
Rust cube	30	100 gp
Trail bar	20	1 gp
Toxic tooth	25	30 gp[1]

1 Plus the cost of the poison inside.

POISONS

Not every scoundrel who uses poison is an unscrupulous murderer, and not every unscrupulous murderer is a scoundrel. Regardless of who uses it, poison is invaluable for its ability to kill, weaken, or otherwise incapacitate a person surreptitiously.

Each of the poisons presented below is unusual in some fashion, whether it has increased versatility or a special effect beyond mere ability damage. Such qualities make many of these toxins attractive choices for those who would never normally consider such methods, or for poisoners with specific agendas.

Blasphemix: Said to be refined from the spilled ichor of a demon, devil, or other fiend, blasphemix corrupts not only the body but also the soul. Perpetually warm, greasy, and possessed of a vile blackness that seems to writhe of its own accord, blasphemix is further profaned by prayers and chants to dark, ancient, and wholly evil powers. This liquid foulness impedes the power of faith and hinders even the most devout cleric's access to his deity. Despite its origin, this poison affects creatures of all alignments and faiths.

If the subject of this poison fails the initial saving throw, its ability to cast divine spells is hindered. For the next 10 rounds, the subject must succeed

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Table 5–4: Poisons

Poison	Type	Craft (Poisonmaking) DC	Initial Damage	Secondary Damage	Price
Blasphemix	Injury DC 22	22	Special*	–1 CL (divine spells)	750 gp
Elemental rime	Injury DC 16	18	1d4 Dex plus vulnerability to fire	1d4 Dex	200 gp
Goodbye kiss	Ingested/Injury DC 15	15	Exhaustion*	Exhaustion or unconsciousness*	350 gp
Gorgon's hair	Contact DC 16*	18	1d6 Str	1d4 Str	300 gp
Salvo	Injury DC 15	12	1d4 ability*	1d4 ability*	100 gp
Siren's breath	Inhaled DC 18	16	Special*	Special*	300 gp
Slow death	Injury DC 14	19	1d6 hp/round*	n/a	250 gp
Zealot's blade	Injury DC 14*	19	1d4 Con	1d4 Con	350 gp

*See text for details.

on a caster level check (DC 15 + spell level) each time it attempts to cast a divine spell. Failure means the spell is lost and has no effect.

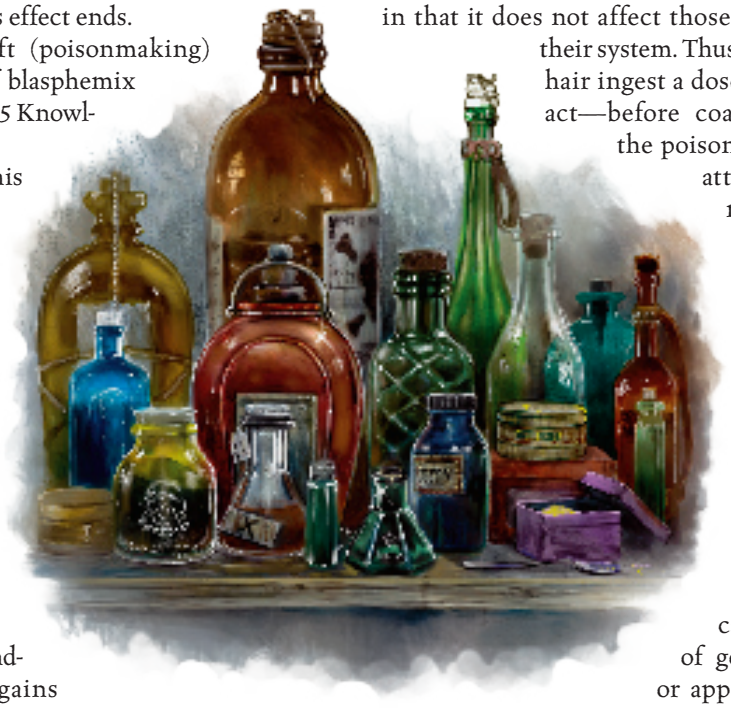
Regardless of the outcome of the initial save, failing the secondary save applies a –1 penalty to the victim's caster level for all divine spells it casts for the next 12 hours. If a creature is subjected to another dose of blasphemix before the effect of the first dose has run its course, the duration of the first dose's effect ends.

In addition to a Craft (poisonmaking) check, creating a dose of blasphemix requires a successful DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check.

Elemental Rime: This frosty blue liquid is concocted from ice found in frozen regions of the Elemental Plane of Air or Water. No amount of heat can totally dispel the coldness that emanates from elemental rime, which partially freezes those exposed to it. If the subject of the poison fails the initial saving throw, in addition to taking 1d4 points of initial and secondary Dexterity damage, it gains vulnerability to fire for 10 rounds.

In addition to a Craft (poisonmaking) check, creating a dose of elemental rime requires a successful DC 15 Knowledge (the planes) check.

Goodbye Kiss: A sweetly flavored tincture distilled from many of the same fungi and roots used in making the drow's infamous sleeping poison, this venom is a standby of poisoners who don't want to harm their victims. Goodbye kiss is a favorite of lotharios, swindlers, and others who want to avoid being followed. It can either be added to food (ingested) or used to coat a small needle (injury); the save DC is the same regardless of the method of application.



Not every poison is lethal

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A subject who fails either the initial or the secondary save becomes exhausted for 1 hour. Failing both saves renders the subject unconscious for 1 hour instead.

Gorgon's Hair: This versatile contact poison is named for a clever murderer who would coat her long hair in this concoction before seducing her victims. Clear and a little greasy, this toxin makes surfaces it is applied to look slightly wet, shiny, or cosmetically accented. It is unusual in that it does not affect those who already have it in their system. Thus, many who use gorgon's hair ingest a dose—a mildly unpleasant act—before coating themselves with the poison. Those who fear being attacked by gorgon's hair might also protect themselves by consuming the poison.

Typically, a would-be poisoner mixes a dose of gorgon's hair with a liquid and drinks the concoction. After ingesting the toxin, that creature is immune to its effect for 24 hours. An immune creature can safely apply a dose of gorgon's hair to a hand or appendage to envenom an unarmed strike or natural attack. Only the first successful attack is affected; all attacks made afterward, even in the same round, do not deliver the poison.

Salvo: The fortuitous creation of a poisoner with little skill, salvo is a weapon of the imprecise and desperate. The poison is relatively cheap and easy to create, but its effect fluctuates wildly from dose to dose.

Salvo deals 1d4 points of initial and secondary damage to a random ability score. Determine the affected ability by rolling 1d6 and consulting the following table; roll once per dose. The poison's type and save DC do not vary.

d6	Ability Damaged
1	Strength
2	Dexterity
3	Constitution
4	Intelligence
5	Wisdom
6	Charisma

Siren's Breath: This bitter-smelling gas causes the subject to become highly susceptible to persuasion. Failing either the initial or secondary saving throw imposes a –5 penalty on Sense Motive checks and on Will saves against enchantment spells and effects for 10 rounds. If a creature is subjected to another dose of siren's breath before the effect of the first dose has run its course, the duration of the first dose's effect ends.

Slow Death: An insidiously persistent toxin distilled in part from a dwarven mining acid, slow death eats away at its victims from within. Unlike most poisons, which deal damage in two stages, slow death works constantly over the course of several rounds.

A subject of this poison who fails the initial Fortitude save takes 1d6 points of damage. Each round thereafter, at the beginning of the poisoner's turn (up to a maximum of 5 rounds), the subject must repeat the saving throw. For each failure, it takes another 1d6 points of damage. Once a save succeeds, the subject takes no further damage.

Zealot's Blade: This venom incorporates the blood of its intended target, making it even deadlier to such creatures. A tool of hunters and assassins who stalk specific targets, each dose of zealot's blade is brewed for a specific type or subtype of creatures. When creating zealot's blade, the poisonmaker must choose a type (and subtype, if applicable) from Table 3–14: Ranger Favored Enemies on page 47 of the *Player's Handbook*. Any creature not of the chosen type or subtype gains a +5 bonus on saves to resist the poison's effect.

MAGIC ITEMS

Scoundrels rely on a vast array of equipment, some of it magical in nature. Because scoundrels come from a widely varied backgrounds and possess myriad abilities and skills, some can create magic items with useful applications. Talented tricksters have even created a few magic items that aren't exactly useful but have interesting effects.

ASPECT MIRROR

Aspect mirrors allow you to converse with others, face to face, at nearly any distance.

Description: A typical *aspect mirror* looks like a plain, circular, silvered mirror, usually 1-1/2 feet in diameter.

Activation: As a standard action, you touch an *aspect mirror* and concentrate to activate it. Touching the mirror a second time and willing away the images it displays deactivates the item. An *aspect mirror* can function for as long as a user wishes and regardless of the wishes of other bearers of mirrors attuned to it.

Aspect mirror

Effect: *Aspect mirrors* are magical communication tools created in groups. An *aspect mirror* allows you to see, hear, and speak as if you were in the same place as an attuned *aspect mirror* (one created as part of the same set as the one you hold). While you use a mirror, you and your location are visible in turn to those near the distant *aspect mirror* you're communicating with. Thus, two distant users can see, hear, and speak as if knowingly scrying on one another at the same time.

To use an *aspect mirror*, you activate both your own and another mirror of your choice (specified when you activate your mirror). The possessor of the other mirror does not need to be present at the mirror's location, and you can scry on its location even without the knowledge of the other mirror's owner. Of course, other users of *aspect mirrors* attuned to your mirror can activate your mirror in the same manner. Thus, owners of *aspect mirrors* often keep them covered or in extradimensional containers when they are not in use.

You cannot cast spells through an *aspect mirror*, although you can use a distant mirror to direct the subjects of enchantment spells you have already cast.

Table 5–5: Magic Items

Item	Cost
Aspect mirror	4,000 gp
Bands of fortune	2,000 gp
Bladeshimmer	750 gp
Lucky charm	7,000 gp
Panic button	750 gp
Rod of ropes	4,000 gp
Shrunken shrieker	500 gp
Trinket of trickery	1,000 gp
Wheel of fortune	6,000 gp

Illus. by H. Lyon

Aspect mirrors function at any range on the same plane. Two *aspect mirrors* are commonly created in a set, although sets exist with as many as five attuned mirrors. Using an *aspect mirror* does not grant you knowledge of all the other mirrors in its set. You can attempt to contact only a mirror that you know exists; you must also have general knowledge of its location or owner. For example, upon activating your *aspect mirror,* you could attempt to reach out to an attuned mirror that you know is held by the merchant Fraudis Smerch or the one that you know is hanging in the back room of the Friendly Girallon tavern. You could not, however, attempt to activate a fourth mirror in the set whose location and existence are unknown to you.

If all the mirrors attuned to a particular *aspect mirror* are destroyed, the remaining mirror becomes an ordinary item of its sort.

Variants: Some versions of *aspect mirrors* project an image of the user that appears on the mirror's surface.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate divination; CL 10th.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, *scrying*, 2,000 gp, 160 XP, 4 days. These construction requirements apply to a single mirror. Making other mirrors attuned to the first one (up to a maximum of four additional attuned mirrors) requires an additional expenditure of gp, XP, and time, as well as another casting of the *scrying* spell, for each other mirror beyond the first one.

Weight: 10 lb. (single mirror).

Price: 4,000 gp (single mirror).

BANDS OF FORTUNE

These innocuous-looking items allow you to change your luck on the battlefield.

Description: *Bands of fortune* are gold armbands elaborately decorated with glass jewels. They occupy space on the body as a pair of bracers.

Prerequisite: You must have at least one luck feat (page 72) or some other source of luck rerolls, such as the granted power of the Luck domain, to activate *bands of fortune*.

Activation: You activate *bands of fortune* by expending one of your luck rerolls as a swift action.

Effect: You can channel your luck into one of three different benefits, each of which lasts for 1 round. You can gain the benefit from only one effect at a time.

- *Attack:* You gain a +2 luck bonus on attack and damage rolls.
- *Defend:* You gain a +2 luck bonus to Armor Class.
- *Survive:* You gain a +2 luck bonus on saving throws.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate transmutation; CL 9th.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, any luck feat, 1,000 gp, 80 XP, 2 days.

Weight: —.

Price: 2,000 gp.

Bands of fortune

Illus. by R. Gallegos

BLADESHIMMER

A silvery oil, *bladeshimmer* causes nonliving objects on which it is smeared to turn invisible.

Description: Most often found in small vials full of what looks like quicksilver, *bladeshimmer* is a thin, magical oil. When it is smeared over a weapon or other object, the materials making up the object become wholly transparent.

Activation: You can coat a weapon or other object of similar size with *bladeshimmer* as a full-round action.

Effect: *Bladeshimmer* renders an object invisible. Anyone holding an affected object appears to have an empty hand, though keen eyes can spot something out of place. Use the bearer's Sleight of Hand check result (with a +10 competence bonus) as the DC for the observer's Spot check.

If you attack with a weapon coated with *bladeshimmer,* the target is considered flat-footed unless it succeeds on a Spot check to notice something unusual. A single successful attack wipes away enough *bladeshimmer* to end the invisibility effect.

A single vial of this substance can coat an area up to 2 feet square. It can't be divided between multiple objects, though multiple vials can combine to make a larger object invisible. Each doubling of the area to be affected requires four times as much *bladeshimmer* (four vials for an area 4 feet square, and so forth) and takes a correspondingly longer time to apply.

Bladeshimmer has no effect on creatures—even undead and constructs cannot be rendered invisible with this substance.

Aura/Caster Level: Faint illusion; CL 5th.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, *invisibility*, 375 gp, 30 XP, 1 day.

Weight: 1 lb.

Price: 750 gp.

LUCKY CHARM

A *lucky charm* makes you more fortunate than you already are.

Description: A thick gold bracelet bearing various decorative solid gold figurines forms a set of *lucky charms*. Each figurine on the bracelet is made in the form of a different item or creature, usually something considered lucky (such as cats, horseshoes, four-leaf clovers, and the like). A new set of *lucky charms* has seven such figurines.

When you activate a *lucky charm*, the bracelet glows briefly with a mild white radiance, and the figurine you chose to activate disappears. Once all its charms are used up, the gold bracelet becomes a nonmagical item worth 100 gp.

Prerequisite: You must have at least one luck feat (page 72) or some other source of luck rerolls, such as the granted power of the Luck domain, to activate a *lucky charm*.

Activation: Whenever you would otherwise use a luck reroll, you can instead activate a *lucky charm*. As a standard action, while holding the bracelet you vigorously rub one of the charms with your thumb while concentrating.

Effect: When you activate this item, you use one of the charms on the bracelet to gain the benefit of a successful luck reroll without expending one of your daily luck rerolls. You can expend only one charm per round. You can use this ability only with luck effects that require one luck reroll to activate. Effects that require more than one luck reroll cannot be partially paid for by expending a charm.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate transmutation; CL 11th.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, any three luck feats, 3,500 gp, 280 XP, 7 days.

Weight: —.

Price: 7,000 gp.

PANIC BUTTON

Taking the shape of various small and innocuous adornments, *panic buttons* produce a wide range of effects depending on the specific type.

Lore: The first of these items were created by the famed assassin Fratello Simm to aid his guildmates in avoiding capture. Knowledge of *panic buttons* began to spread when examples of the items were discovered on captured assassins' guild members. Fratello originally created the bolstering, escaping, and flexing *panic buttons*. Since then, a wider assortment of buttons has been developed by other sorts of spellcasters.

Description: As their name implies, *panic buttons* often look like normal buttons sewn into clothing. They might also resemble round metal bells, glass beads, or other small, inconspicuous adornments.

Regardless of its form, when activated a *panic button* bursts with a small flash of light, a tiny popping noise, and a faint smell of sulfur.

Activation: You activate a *panic button* by dropping or throwing it onto the ground. These items are designed for quick use; you can pull a *panic button* off your clothing (as long as you aren't wearing armor) and drop it in your square as a swift action. You can pull it off your clothing and toss it into another square as standard action. A thrown *panic button* has a range increment of 5 feet. Throwing the button into a square other than your own requires a ranged touch attack, as though it were a splash weapon, and it lands in a random square if you miss (see *PH* 158).

Effect: A *panic button* affects whatever creature is in the square it lands in. Unless otherwise noted, a button's effect lasts for 1 round. If you target another creature's square, that creature is allowed a DC 16 Fortitude save to resist the effect created by a *panic button*. (Most *panic buttons* are harmless effects that creatures would like to receive.)

A number of different kinds of *panic buttons* exist. The following are the most common; each one lists the spell needed to create it.

Bolstering: You gain 10 temporary hit points for 1 round. Requires *false life*.

Dodging: You gain a +2 dodge bonus to your Armor Class against the first attack made against you in the next round. Requires *haste*.

Escaping: You immediately gain the benefit of *dimension door*, except that the range is limited to 30 feet and you must have line of sight to the destination. Requires *dimension door*.

Flexing: You gain a +5 bonus on all Dexterity-related skill checks and Dexterity checks made in the next round. Requires *cat's grace*.

Meandering: You act as if under the effect of a *slow* spell for 1 round; this *panic button* is usually thrown at an opponent. Requires *slow*.

Protecting: You gain a +2 bonus on the next saving throw you roll within 1 round. Requires *resistance*.

Retreating: You gain an enhancement bonus of 30 feet to your speed for 1 round. Requires *expeditious retreat*.

Silencing: You act as if under the effect of a *silence* spell, centered on you, for 1 round. Requires *silence*.

Standing: You act as if under the effect of a *dimensional anchor* spell for 1 round; this *panic button* is usually thrown at an opponent. Requires *dimensional anchor*.

Strengthening: You gain a +5 bonus on all Strength-related skill checks and Strength checks made in the next round. Requires *bull's strength*.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate transmutation; CL 7th.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, spell varies (see individual description), 375 gp, 30 XP, 1 day.

Weight: —.

Price: 750 gp.

ROD OF ROPES

This versatile item meets your every rope-related need.

Description: Crafted from the darkest teak and repeatedly stained until it holds a lustrous black shine, this rod is a sculpted, 18-inch-long baton. Closer inspection (Search DC 15) reveals three barely perceptible concave indentations in the middle third of the rod.

Activation: The three indentations act as buttons. Pressing any one of the rod's buttons requires a move action.

Effect: The rod has three functions, each of which can be employed an unlimited number of times. However, no two functions can be used at the same time

Rope: When you press button 1, rope begins to extrude from one end of the rod at the rate of 60 feet per round. The rod can extrude 300 feet of rope in this manner. Pressing the button a second time stops the rope from extruding. Pressing it a third time draws the rope back in, also at a rate of 60 feet per round. Any knot in the rope automatically unties when it comes within 30 feet of the rod. This rope has the same hardness and hit points as the rest of the rod.

Grappling Hook and Rope: When you press button 2, a small leather wrist loop springs from one end of the rod and three sharp grappling hooks sprout from the other end. Pressing the button again launches one-third of the rod (the end with the three hooks) in the direction you aim it. A length of rope up to 300 feet long trails behind the launched section and connects it with the end you hold; all 300 feet of rope can discharge in 1 round. The rope stops unreeling if the hooks strike something solid (including a creature) or if you give the rod a quick backward jerk. Pressing the button a third time retracts the rope, drawing the held end toward the hooked end if it is secured properly. The retracting feature can pull up to 1,000 pounds with it, drawing up 60 feet of rope per round. The rope has the same hardness and hit points as the rest of the rod.

This function can be used to attack and push back opponents within 30 feet (beyond that distance it lacks sufficient power). On a successful ranged attack (no range increment) the hooked end deals 1d6 points of damage. The force of the blow is considerable, and those struck by it are subject to a bull rush effect (treat the hooked end as having a +5 bonus on its opposed check). The hooked end cannot pursue a pushed opponent.

Grappling Hooks and Slide: When you press button 3, three sharp grappling hooks sprout from each end of the rod. Pressing the button again launches the two ends of the rod (each one-third of its length) in opposite directions simultaneously. A length of rope up to 300 feet long trails behind each launched section and connects it with the middle third you hold (all 600 feet of rope can discharge in 1 round). The grappling hooks work exactly as described above, including the possibility of bull rushing opponents. Pressing the button a third time causes part of the middle section to expand slightly in diameter and slide freely along the extruded rope. The slide can be released from the remaining part of the middle section by squeezing it to loosen it. Two hand loops allow you to slide down the rope if it is at an angle. Regardless of the angle of the rope or the load on it (up to 1,000 pounds), if attached firmly the rope does not sag.

Pushing any button a second time returns the rod to its previous (unactivated) state.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate transmutation; CL 10th.

Construction: Craft Rod, *animate rope*, 2,000 gp, 160 XP, 4 days.

Weight: 4 lb.

Price: 4,000 gp.

Illus. by E. Cox

Rod of ropes

SHRUNKEN SHRIEKER

This shrunken head can be attached to any weapon, shield, or piece of armor. It lets out a scream if anyone but the true owner attempts to use the item.

Lore: Ensorceled by savage adepts, the heads of fallen enemies now guard the armaments of those who killed them.

Description: This item is a disgusting severed head, shrunken to the size of a baby's fist, with its eyes and mouth loosely stitched shut. A clasp in its long, straggly black hair allows the head to be clamped or tied onto other objects.

Activation: A *shrunken shrieker* can be attached to any weapon, shield, or piece of armor. Once it is so affixed, it considers the attacher to be the item's true owner.

Effect: A *shrunken shrieker* dangles quietly from the weapon, shield, or armor it is attached to, as long as it considers the user to be the item's true owner. If any other creature attempts to use the item to which the head is attached, the *shrunken shrieker*'s mouth distends around the stitches, letting out a horrible, inhuman screaming. The sound of a *shrunken shrieker* is just as loud as an audible alarm created by the *alarm* spell, and it continues for as long as a creature other than the item's true owner uses the item.

The head stops screaming as soon as the item it is attached to is put down or removed.

A *shrunken shrieker* can be ripped off an item as a full-round action. If the head has started screaming and is torn off an item, it continues shrieking wherever it falls until either the true owner of the item it was attached to touches it or it is destroyed. A *shrunken shrieker* has hardness 2 and 5 hit points.

Variants: Some *shrunken shriekers* are said to be crafted from the heads of fiends. These variations scream so terribly that they also hinder those who make use of the items they guard; a creature other than the item's true owner must make a DC 13 Will save or be shaken for as long as the head continues screaming. This is a mind-affecting fear ability. Creatures that fail this save are vulnerable to this *shrunken fiendshrieker's* screaming for the next 24 hours, they do not receive a new save if they put down the affected item and pick it back up later.

Shrunken shrieker

Aura/Caster Level: Faint abjuration; CL 3rd.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, *alarm*, 250 gp, 20 XP, 1 day.

Weight: 1/2 lb.

Price: 500 gp. A *shrunken fiendshrieker* variant costs an extra 1,500 gp, and its XP cost and crafting time increase accordingly.

TRINKET OF TRICKERY

A *trinket of trickery* makes you trickier than you already are.

Description: *Trinkets of trickery* can take the form of any small baubles, totems, or lucky charms. A popular shape is that of a stylized cat sitting on its haunches and waving, but many such items resemble chess pieces or figurines of mounted knights and dragons. A *trinket of trickery* is never larger than 1 inch in its longest dimension.

Prerequisite: You must know at least one skill trick to use a *trinket of trickery*.

Activation: You must wear a *trinket of trickery* on your person for at least 24 hours to attune it to you. After that time, the trinket grants its power to you as long it is on your person (in a pocket, held on a necklace around the neck, attached to a helmet, and so on). It does not grant its power if stored within a backpack, *bag of holding*, or similar location; it must be in close physical contact in some way (though it doesn't take up space on your body).

Effect: A *trinket of trickery* holds the secret knowledge of a single skill trick (see page 83 for a list). You can use that trick as if you had spent skill points to learn it, but only if you meet the prerequisite for learning the trick. You can't gain the benefit of more than one *trinket of trickery* simultaneously; if you wear a second trinket while one is already on your body, the second has no effect.

Aura/Caster Level: Faint transmutation; CL 5th.

Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, knowledge of the trick contained, 500 gp, 40 XP, 1 day.

Weight: —.

Price: 1,000 gp.

WHEEL OF FORTUNE

This hand-held wheel grants its user a dose of extra fortune.

Lore: Clerics of Olidammara claim the genesis of these items lies with their fickle and fun-loving god, and nobody seems intent on arguing the point with them. Indeed, the oldest known *wheels of fortune* bear the Laughing Rogue's symbol in conspicuous locations.

Description: A *wheel of fortune* consists of a 2-foot-wide wooden box with a brightly painted metal wheel, a little larger in diameter than the width of the box, partially encased at one end. The wheel is divided into eight "slices," each one corresponding to one of the colors of the rainbow, plus a white slice. A brass needle sticks out the end of the box at the wheel end and acts as a pointer. In the center of the box's top, lined up perfectly with the edge of the wheel, is a raised brass button (which sometimes bears the mark of Olidammara).

Spinning the wheel causes the color slices to blur into a disk of white. Regardless of how tightly a user holds it and no matter how hard the wheel is spun, the item never wobbles or loses its perfect balance.

Activation: Pressing the brass button (a standard action) activates the wheel, causing it to spin all the way around seven times. One round after activation, the wheel comes to a stop sometime during its eighth rotation with the brass pointer indicating one of the eight slices at random. Any attempt to stop the wheel or influence its outcome once its button has been pushed not only fails but also results in a jolt that deals 1d6 points of electricity damage. A *wheel of fortune* confers its effect on the character holding it.

Effect: When the wheel stops spinning, you gain an effect that depends on the slice the brass pointer indicates. The effect lasts for 24 hours. Once used, a *wheel of fortune* does not function again for the same character for 24 hours.

Roll on the following table to determine the wheel's effect.

Illus. by K. Yanner

d8	Color	Effect
1	Red	–1 penalty on attacks and saves
2	Orange	+2 luck bonus on Str checks and Str-based skill checks
3	Yellow	+2 luck bonus on Dex checks and Dex-based skill checks
4	Green	+2 luck bonus on Con checks and Con-based skill checks
5	Blue	+2 luck bonus on Int checks and Int-based skill checks
6	Indigo	+2 luck bonus on Wis checks and Wis-based skill checks
7	Violet	+2 luck bonus on Cha checks and Cha-based skill checks
8	White	10 temporary hit points

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate transmutation. CL 8th.
Construction: Craft Wondrous Item, *bear's strength, bestow curse, bull's endurance, cat's grace, eagle's splendor, false life, fox's cunning, owl's wisdom,* 3,000 gp, 240 XP, 6 days.
Weight: 2 lb.
Price: 6,000 gp.

LIVING ITEMS

In matters of survival, adventurers can't limit their resources to the basic gear moldering on shop shelves or tended by inexperienced commoners. The most resourceful and imaginative travelers make use of what's available around them, wonders of the natural world: exploitable creatures and oddities of the planes that possess fantastic and versatile abilities.

Green air bramble

Illus. by E. Cox

The following items all are or incorporate forms of life, but each creature is simple or docile enough to allow use of its special abilities. Some are frail and can survive for only a limited amount of time or require some form of tending. Otherwise, each of these living items is a nonmagical form of equipment that an adventurer might use just as he uses a manufactured item. Such items might be subject to unusual hazards (such as a torch bug's tube breaking or a planar mote escaping and floating away).

Table 5–6: Living Items

Item	Cost	Weight
Green air bramble	80 gp	-—
Gut mites	50 gp	1 lb.
Jabberweed	60 gp	1 lb.
Planar mote	300 gp	—
Planar mote, greater	600 gp	1 lb.
Rust monster wand	160 gp	2 lb.
Torch bug paste	25 gp	—
Torch bug tube	30 gp	1 lb.

GREEN AIR BRAMBLE

A creeping vine cultivated by many traveling druids and clerics of nature-loving deities, this fast-growing plant sprouts clusters of swampy green berries even in the harshest weather and most inhospitable climes. Hardier than many plants, green air bramble requires very little water or soil, allowing it to be uprooted and transported for long stretches with ease, as long as it has a plentiful supply of fresh air. However, it is particularly susceptible to poisons of all types. If exposed to such toxins, its berries swiftly wrinkle, turning a bright yellow in the process, and its normally healthy, small green leaves and tendrils turn brown and contract. This sensitivity makes the creeper a valuable first warning to travelers fearing toxins, and many green-thumbed adventurers carry staffs twined with green air bramble, or dangle lengths of it from their belts.

As long as you are carrying a length of green air bramble in a visible location, such as coiled around a staff or on your person, you gain a +2 bonus on Fortitude saves made to resist inhaled poisons and airborne sickening or nauseating effects, such as those created by a troglodyte's stench or a *stinking cloud* spell. Green air bramble grants no benefit against sickening or nauseating effects that don't travel through the air, such as a cloaker's nauseating moan or the distraction caused by a swarm. A 3-foot length of green air bramble is required to gain a benefit from the plant. A length of the vine can be wrapped around a quarterstaff, polearm, longbow, or any similarly long-hafted weapon without reducing its effectiveness.

Long-lived as well as hardy, a green air bramble lasts indefinitely if planted in moist soil for 6 hours per week. Once it is exposed to poison, however, the vine dies.

GUT MITES

The cause of a common, painful affliction among gigantic creatures, the pests called gut mites have been the salvation of more than one unlucky monster hunter. Each no bigger than a human's thumbnail, these white, flylike parasites lay their eggs in the preferred food of large predators. The grubs quickly hatch within a creature's stomach and feast on the liquefied food within—and, when that food runs out, the tender flesh of its host's gut. One or two make their presence known within a host by merely a dull aching, but a swarm of gut mites can leave even the mightiest beast coiled in pain.

Harvested from the entrails of gigantic monsters, small swarms of these creatures are bottled and sold to those likely to encounter ravenous beasts. A typical bottle contains some adult gut mites and a mass of squirming grubs in a nutrient goo. It is a blessing to any character who has been swallowed whole.

If you open a flask of gut mites while you are within a monster's gizzard or stomach and pour out its ravenous contents, the grubs burrow into the tissue. The monster immediately vomits up the contents of its stomach, including any swallowed creatures, and cannot use its swallow whole ability for 1d4 minutes. A successful DC 20 Fortitude save negates this effect, and instead causes the swallowing creature to be sickened for 1d4 minutes. Creatures immune to extra damage from critical hits are not affected by gut mites.

Flask of gut mites

A flask of gut mites can be used only once. The adults die within a day or two, while the grubs can survive for a week before their nutrient medium is depleted.

JABBERWEED

One of the few plants native to the Windswept Depths of Pandemonium, jabberweed is an ugly, tenacious root that looks something like a pocked, many-fingered, skeletal hand. The countless holes that riddle jabberweed constantly gasp and wheeze, creating a low susurrus of background noise that is unnoticeable on the wind-scoured landscape of the plant's home plane.

Sprouts of jabberweed are sold wrapped in moist cloth. While wrapped, the plant creates no noise. Once unwrapped and exposed to air, it begins whispering, creating a low hissing audible out to 100 feet. Creatures that succeed on a DC 15 Listen check notice the sound of the jabberweed as well as the direction of its source. Regardless of whether any creatures notice the sound, all creatures within 100 feet of the plant take a –4 penalty on other Listen checks, since the noise disguises and muffles many minor sounds.

If retrieved and repacked in moist cloth, jabberweed can be used multiple times while it lives. Jabberweed can survive for 1 week after being removed from its home plane. You can attempt a DC 18 Knowledge (nature) check once per week to keep a sprout of jabberweed alive for that week. The plant dies 1 week after a failed check.

Planar motes

PLANAR MOTES

Having some of the characteristics of plants and some of animals, planar motes are native to the Outer Planes. They are wispy creatures, each about the size of a gold piece, resembling floating globules of plane-stuff. Their shape and coloring vary wildly and reflect their native planes. Planar motes from Arcadia, for example, look like large dandelion seeds, while those from Baator take the form of floating urchins spiked with metal barbs. Largely harmless and seemingly unintelligent, planar motes are thought to be spontaneously generated by the planes themselves, although it is unclear for what purpose.

Despite their strange nature and lack of Hit Dice, planar motes emit auras of moderate strength directly tied to the alignment of the plane they came from. A planar mote from Bytopia, for example, has a moderate aura of good, while a mote from the Abyss has moderate auras of both chaos and evil (see Chapter 5 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for the alignments of the Outer Planes). So concentrated is a planar mote's alignment aura that it can disguise your alignment while you carry it. Any alignment-detecting spell detects the alignment of the mote, as long as it is more powerful than your own alignment aura (*PH* 219). For example, a 12th-level lawful good warrior carrying a planar mote from Arborea (chaotic and good) would register as chaotic good, since his aura is weaker than that of the mote. However, a 5th-level lawful evil cleric of Hextor carrying the same mote would register as lawful evil, because his aura is strong, overpowering the mote's.

A planar mote is not a magic item; it does not take up space on the body or radiate magic. A planar mote functions only for the creature it is in closest contact with. Relying on its home plane for survival, a planar mote fades away and vanishes 1 week + 1d6 days after being taken from its native plane. A planar mote is destroyed if subjected to the spells *banishment*, *dismissal*, *dispel chaos/evil/good/law* (corresponding to the mote's alignment), or *protection from chaos/evil/good/law* (corresponding to the mote's alignment). A planar mote can also be physically attacked. It has hardness 1 and 5 hit points.

Planar motes fly at a speed of 10 feet with perfect maneuverability. To gain one's effect, a user must contain it in some manner or risk having it escape. A simple jar or box carried in the user's pack often suffices.

Illus. by M. Coimbra and H. Lyon

Much more rare are greater planar motes, which shed strong alignment auras. These more potent motes last for 1 month + 2d6 days after removal from their home plane, but otherwise function in the same way as normal planar motes.

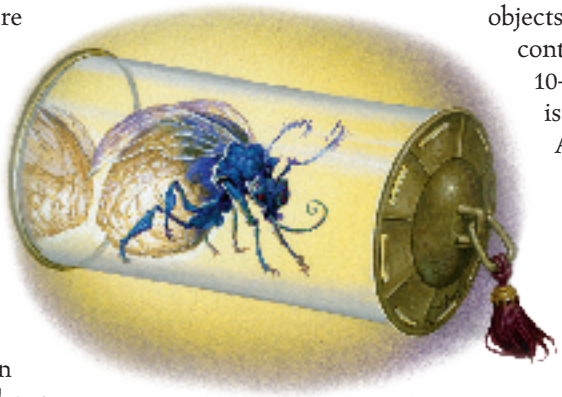
RUST MONSTER WAND

The skittering larval young of rust monsters are just as insatiable as adults when it comes to ferrous metals. Little more than 1 inch long and bristling with underdeveloped armor and appendages, these nuisances have the same rusting ability as mature rust monsters, their whiplike antennae ever probing for the touch of metal. Some clever thieves have figured out that these creatures can be helpful when carefully harnessed in a suitable container.

Such a container, commonly called a rust monster wand, is a 1-foot-long piece of glass tubing about 4 inches in diameter that contains about a dozen rust monster larvae. One end of the tube is sealed shut, and the other one is fitted with a two-layer wooden cap. The outer layer of this top covers the wand's end; when closed, it prevents the larvae from touching anything outside the wand. The inside layer is a thin latticework that keeps the immature aberrations inside the tube but allows their antennae to extend through the holes in the lattice. Uncapping the solid cover and running the tip of the wand across a metal surface allows the hungry young to slowly but effectively eat through metal objects or barriers. The rust monster larvae in a wand can ruin a Large weapon or suit of armor (or a metal object of similar size) in 1 minute, a Medium weapon or suit of armor in 9 rounds, or a Small weapon or suit of armor in 6 rounds. The wand is brittle and must be applied to a target rather delicately, so it cannot be used as a weapon.

The larvae within a rust monster wand can survive for about 2 months if given air (by opening the outer layer of the end cap) and fed the equivalent of five coins of metal (or more) per day.

If removed from the wand, individual larvae do not have the size or ability to do appreciable harm to metal equipment. One of these creatures by itself has 1 hit point and can be crushed as a standard action.



Torch bug tube

Illus. by C. Frank

TORCH BUG ITEMS

Common to plains and savannas, the sluggish torch bug looks like a bloated firefly. The insect's bulbous abdomen, nearly the size of a child's fist, accounts for more than half its body. When torch bugs are agitated, or during their lengthy mating season, their abdomens glow with a warm, yellow light. Inhabitants of areas thick with torch bugs harvest the sluggish insects for a variety of purposes.

Torch Bug Paste

Bladders made from severed torch bug abdomens are sold for the strange mixture of chemicals that grant the insects their glow. Each contains one application of the luminescent slime known as torch bug paste. These bladders do not shed light, and the paste within does not begin glowing until exposed to air.

Torch bug paste can be applied to inanimate objects or living creatures. One bladder contains enough paste to paint up to a 10-foot-square area; a full-round action is required per 5-foot square covered. A treated area glows for 1 hour and sheds as much light as a torch (emanating bright light out to 20 feet and shadowy illumination for another 20 feet beyond that). Torch bug paste makes a painted object highly visible, and it is often used as a temporary decoration or to mark targets in the dark. It can be used to write short words or simple symbols, but these marks must be rather large, since the paste's glow obscures details.

A bladder of torch bug paste can also be thrown as a splash weapon (*PH* 158). Treat this attack as a ranged touch attack with a range increment of 10 feet. A bladder of torch bug paste bursts upon striking a firm surface, covering the target and every adjacent creature or item with the glowing chemical. Creatures struck by the paste are affected as if by a *faerie fire* spell for 1 hour. This effect is not magical and cannot be dispelled. Torch bug paste can be washed away from a creature or a 5-foot square as a full-round action but requires at least 1 gallon of water.

Torch Bug Tube

A torch bug tube is a 1-foot-long, sealed glass cylinder with ends capable of being unscrewed. Inside dwells a single adult torch bug. When the tube is shaken (a move action for any creature holding it), the insect inside becomes irritated and begins glowing. This glow sheds as much light as a torch (emanating bright light out to 20 feet and shadowy illumination for another 20 feet beyond that). The light begins to dim as the bug calms down and goes out after 3 minutes unless the tube is shaken again. A torch bug tube can be taken underwater without being extinguished and does not emanate a magical aura.

A torch bug can glow for up to 1 hour a day, after which it must eat and rest; torch bugs must be fed daily (they eat mostly smaller insects), or they grow too weak to shed light and eventually die. In addition, the tube end must be unscrewed once per day to replenish the insect's air supply.

Illus. by D. Bircham

Scoundrels thrive under pressure. In the panicked, harried moments that require one to act or be ruined, these quick-witted folk let instinct take over, trusting in their deft skills, sharp minds, and, sometimes, pure dumb luck to carry them through. Scoundrels buck trends and break the averages, taking on tasks and aiming for goals few would dare, facing danger with a do-or-die mentality that either brings glory and fame or paves the way to an early grave. For scoundrels, doing the impossible is the name of the game.

Scoundrel adventures are risky and unpredictable gambles against wildly unbalanced odds. Whether stealing the hoard out from under a sleeping dragon, convincing a usurper that he's the rightful heir to the throne, or scamming the local church of Hextor and then escaping far enough away not to care when the priests finally notice—such escapades are the dreams and daily doings of these daring dodgers.

This chapter provides what the DM needs to run adventures specially tailored to cunning and sharp-tongued scoundrel characters. Sample scoundrel adventures, the details specific to such exploits, and ideas for such quests should provide everything you need to challenge even the quickest-thinking swindler or sneak. You'll also find some maps of sample locations useful for scoundrels to ply their art.

In addition, the new organizations and contacts presented here offer more opportunities to mingle with like-minded characters, whether as helpful peers, cunning challengers, or sinister opponents. The legendary sites described in this chapter are locations made specifically for scoundrels—places where they might push their limits, tempt fate, and make use of some of the new tricks and capabilities presented elsewhere in this book.

WHAT ARE SCOUNDREL ADVENTURES?

Inside a vault hidden deep within Citadel Gashgnaw rests the *Hyacinth of Inestimable Beauty*, the greatest work of art the world has ever known. The Brotherhood of the Bloody Palm stole the masterpiece five years ago. This army of brigands claimed Citadel Gashgnaw, an ancient, cursed fortress, to keep the *Hyacinth* their prisoner. To ensure this, they have stocked the citadel with countless traps, insidious magic, and monstrous creatures from throughout the planes. The vault itself is warded against all forms of penetration and teleportation, and the sole magic key dangles around the neck of the legendary bandit-gladiator-turned-warden,

Rotmaw the Reeking. The fortress is impenetrable, and only a siege lasting months could ever hope to claim the *Hyacinth*.

One scoundrel, some successful Disguise and Bluff checks, and a little bit of Knowledge (local)—for some good gladiatorial stories—has Rotmaw fooled and the *Hyacinth* out of its vault in less than a half-hour. Thus, years of Brotherhood planning and hours of DM preparation were cast aside with a jaunty smile and a few simple dice rolls.

This nightmare scenario is every Dungeon Master's fear. But adventures including scoundrels don't have to end this way, nor do they need to be all about tricks and PCs talking themselves out of danger. Rather, they should focus on compelling problems that demand solutions most likely to succeed with the resources at hand—or at least minimizing the loss of resources and blood. Such adventures should be fraught with twists and mounting developments, giving characters the opportunity to improvise and be creative. They should challenge the scoundrel's ingenuity and resourcefulness, outside the dungeon and within, allowing her to shine as both a cad and a charmer, as a clever combatant and quick thinker able to surmount any obstacle.

Take the following four stereotypical adventure seeds, for example. Any one of these could easily be the basis of a standard D&D adventure, but with a simple shift in perspective or situation adjustment, they become perfect challenges for scoundrels.

Illus. by M. Phillippi

DEFEAT THE CULT

The party must track down a group of demon worshipers and defeat them and their minions before they can summon their dark patron. This mission could easily be a simple hack-and-slash strike, but to challenge a scoundrel, adopt a different approach and additional obstacles.

In a scoundrelly variation of this adventure, the PCs might need to infiltrate the cult and sabotage it from within. The initial challenge lies in discovering the cult's location and a way to contact it. Once they overcome that barrier, the PCs must meet with and convince the cultists that they're willing and worthy to join, which might force them to devise some reason to avoid a foul initiation. This entire process could be made more difficult by the introduction of a cult member or kidnapped victim whom the PCs know, and whom they must silence or convince of their sincerity.

Ultimately, when the time comes to turn against the cult, the PCs risk being sacrificed themselves in the final rite, or could unleash a greater danger as a result of their disruption. Interrupting the cult's summoning might open a portal that unleashes a stream of lesser fiends that grows and tries to consume the world. In either instance, only quick thinking and immediate action can avert catastrophe.

SAVE THE PRINCESS

This fantasy cliché sees the adventurers rescuing a damsel in distress from some foul villain.

A number of variations on this theme make it a more compelling scoundrel adventure. Perhaps the PCs are entreated to bargain with the villain to win the princess back. Finding out what the kidnapper wants and dealing with his demands, or conducting hostage negotiations, could make for an interesting series of adventures. If the villain has already made his demands clear, the PCs might have to convince him that they have what he wants, make the trade, and escape with the princess before their deception is discovered.

In another variation, perhaps the princess doesn't want to return with the PCs, or isn't a princess at all (or even a female). The PCs might need to accompany a hotheaded adventurer out to make her name, or bargain with her or otherwise convince her to return home. Alternatively, the "prisoner" might have actually eloped with her supposed captor. In such a case, the PCs might have to resort to especially convincing trickery or even abduction to ensure her return—or help the lovers remain free, if her story touches their hearts.

Indeed, the "princess" might not be a humanoid at all, but rather a royal pet or prized guardian, such as a gorgon, griffon, dragonne, or wyvern. When the subject of their mission is even more dangerous than the villain who stole it, the PCs need to use all their skill and guile to survive the rescue.

EXPLORE THE DUNGEON

A D&D staple, dungeons feature an endless variety of lethal traps, cruel monsters, and fantastic treasure.

ADAPTABLE ADVENTURE SITES

Adaptable adventure sites were first introduced in the *Monster Manual IV* supplement. Instead of being associated with a particular adventure, they depict some archetypal adventuring venues. The adaptable adventure sites in this chapter are locations suitable for scoundrel activities: a speakeasy in a rough part of town (page 127), a black market and thieves' den in the sewers of a great city (page 145), and a rebel encampment in a ruined temple (page 136). In addition, an overview map of the gatetown of Tradegate (page 131) supports the organization known as the Free League.

Each of these maps can be used "out of the box"—all you, as the DM, need to do is populate them with appropriate characters, monsters, and rewards. Any of them, of course, can be modified to suit the needs of a particular story that's being played out in the campaign.

Scoundrels use their wits to overcome even the deadliest challenges

To challenge scoundrels, though, a dungeon must be more than room after room of monsters and traps. Yet this requirement doesn't have to make dungeons more complicated. Present the occasional encounter that challenges the wit rather than the sword. Riddles and puzzles can be fun, but the dungeon's variety can extend beyond these. Laying a wide chasm in the path of the PCs forces them to look for ways to climb or swing over, use materials from previous areas to create a bridge, or otherwise innovate. The hazards in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* and books such as the *Frostburn, Sandstorm,* and *Stormwrack* supplements also present obstacles that take planning to surmount. A room filled with hurricane-force winds, in the path of crushing water, or tainted by brown mold makes a far more interesting barrier than a mere magically locked door.

With some simple additions, even basic traps and hazards can become challenges suited to scoundrels. Perhaps a falling-block trap can be disabled only by reaching its controls atop a crumbling statue, or the flame jets in the walls might actually be hidden kobold sorcerers. Even the most normal-looking floor becomes dangerous if it's an illusion. Occasionally deceive the characters; if everything isn't always what it seems, scoundrels have the opportunity to be daring and think fast to survive.

Your "dungeon" doesn't need to be the typical multi-leveled castle or crypt. Maybe it's a series of burrows still inhabited by the creatures that dug them, or a tall building fallen onto its side. Try making the dungeon itself a hazard: Fill the location with fast-moving water, expose it to extreme temperatures, or even slant it wildly so PCs need to climb in order to explore. Innovations such as these compel the characters to put additional thought into their delve and make preparations beyond merely bashing in the next door.

Also, try stocking your dungeon with monsters that require skill or cleverness to defeat: After only one slash, an adventurer should realize that attacking a black pudding in melee probably isn't the wisest method of defeating it. Consider using monsters with gaze attacks, evil fey vulnerable only to cold iron, ethereal foes, or creatures with unusual forms of movement that require PCs to be creative with their tactics. Such creatures require a few Knowledge checks or trial and error to defeat and can make an otherwise simple encounter much more rewarding.

SLAY THE DRAGON

This iconic D&D adventure sees a brave band of adventurers face one of the most awesome monsters in existence and claim a dozen royal ransoms in treasure.

The easiest way to make this plot better suit scoundrels is to choose a dragon whose Challenge Rating is substantially higher than the average level of the PCs. Characters who expect to defeat a foe merely by having their full hit points and a full complement of spells have little reason to innovate. Those who know that their only hope for victory—and survival—depends on unfair advantage, clever traps, quick thinking, fast action, and a bit of luck, are much more likely to seek creative answers and tactics for their impending confrontation.

Even after the defeat of the dragon, the creature's hoard can trigger more adventures. Thieves, jealous aristocrats, and other dragons might make plays to kill the PCs and take their new wealth. Any number of causes and religions might harass the party for donations. Victims of the dragon

BEKNIGHTED

My Most Dread And Favored Master:

I have the misfortune to report to you a most unpleasant turn of events during our recruitment and disciplinary expedition of two nights past in Old Town. I know that failure is unacceptable to She Who Will Not Be Denied, and I humbly offer my unworthy head. I ask only that those who followed my ill-advised command not suffer my much deserved fate.

I was leading a patrol of six initiates into the less traveled areas of the district, especially those near taverns and other institutions of ill repute, to spread the news of Her coming and to induct new servants of Her will. We were also charged with eliminating obvious enemies of our great mission.

We had just enlightened a downtrodden victim of this heartless kingdom and were transporting him back to base when a lookout spotted a small band of that sort of ruffians who call themselves adventurers. These brutes, led by an insufferable so-called champion of the light, were clearly spoiling for a fight, with weapons drawn and bellicose demeanors.

I decided to further Her cause as well as remove this stain from the streets. Directing two followers to the rooftops, I led the remaining forces to an alley bordering the intruders' most likely path (depositing our newest recruit farther within for safety). When they drew into range, the snipers opened fire and scattered the approaching party. Our squad then surged from the alley and isolated two of them, including the paladin.

The fight initially went well. We focused on the armor-plated paladin first and quickly dropped him, then turned our attention to the other adventurer. Our snipers were coming under some pressure from the others, but we would be able to relieve them momentarily. But just as I was about to strike the killing blow, I was staggered by a mighty stroke from behind me—the paladin had only feigned death! I was forced to turn my attention toward him, which gave the other adventurers an opening to relieve their companion. Within seconds the battle had turned, and in the interests of preserving as many of Her followers as possible, I ordered a retreat.

In all, we lost three loyal servants as well as the newest recruit, who apparently fled the scene without striking a blow. I regret that I did not anticipate such action, and I accept full responsibility for the injury to Her cause. I only pray She will not devour my soul.

Your repentful servant,
Delthan

might seek the return of their stolen goods. The newly wealthy PCs must be either subtle or cunning to avoid losing their fortune. Alternatively, a strange hoard might force characters to be clever just in spending it. Thousands of coins printed with a well-known blasphemous symbol, hundreds of cords of an incredibly rare magical wood, or an entire hoard melted into a massive, bejeweled lump—each could each make for its own adventures. Overall, great wealth might bring more trouble than it's worth.

DMING WITH SCOUNDRELS

Players aren't the only ones at the gaming table who need to change their thinking to account for scoundrel characters. Ever unpredictable, a scoundrel can be challenging, even frustrating, to handle for the DM. Just as Chapter 1 describes the scoundrel in player's terms, this section gives the DM some advice on handling scoundrels in the game.

AGAINST THE SCOUNDREL

Scoundrel characters are not cheaters. Many D&D adventures rely on fast-paced combat, deadly traps, and hazard-filled dungeons; scoundrels prefer to talk their way out of encounters or find ways to circumvent them. This tendency might frustrate you if you have created a dungeon of artful and deadly complexity, but you should resist the urge to force the PCs down a specific path.

The trick is to compromise, but on your own terms. Allow the scoundrel a victory every now and then. Let her pull the wool over a few guards' eyes, turn some monsters against their masters, or even steal a villain's favorite magic item. Her victories are fun changes of pace and make the player proud of her choices. But don't let her get away with everything. Let her think she's won, then spring another trap, give the occasional enemy a *medallion of thoughts*, *helm of telepathy*, or some other means of reading minds, or confront her with foes that can't be charmed or reasoned with. Don't always let a scoundrel discover every danger. Surprise her with something she didn't expect.

Strike a balance between making a scoundrel feel clever and not allowing your game to go astray, but always reward truly inventive plans.

USING THE SCOUNDREL

Rather than opposing a scoundrel character's charm and daring, try using it to your advantage. Daring heists, disguised identities, and fast talking to get out of danger are all thrilling story features in their own right. When such cons go wrong, though, exciting and memorable adventures are also born of trials, jailbreaks, recovering lost treasures, or escaping a dreadful demise. Even in dungeons, a plan that avoids one trap might result in springing another, puzzles might guard a potent threat instead of treasure, and befriending an opponent might lead to a whole host of problems—especially if a monster decides to tag along with its new buddy.

SUPER-SMART OPPONENTS

Scoundrels are clever, and you should give them the chance to exercise their guile. While they have cunning, you have access to dozens of equally shrewd opponents and vastly experienced monsters, many with genius-level intellects. Bend the rules in favor of the enemy from time to time and make changes to your adventure on the fly to represent uncanny anticipation of the PCs' actions. For example, you might not have expected a scoundrel's ingenious plot to infiltrate a spell-warded tomb, but the ancient, paranoid lich that lurks within (which you have just concocted) surely has.

Keep in mind that not all enemies are geniuses, though. Players inevitably become discouraged and frustrated if every opponent is always a step ahead of them.

SCOUNDRELS AND NONSCOUNDRELS

Don't forget your group's other characters (and their players) as you deal with scoundrels. Don't give scoundrels too much of the limelight, especially if that leaves other players doing nothing but watching. As in any session that could become monopolized by one character, scoundrel or no, make sure to give other PCs the opportunity to shine.

Just as characters shouldn't feel penalized for not making the same choices as a scoundrel, the scoundrel should not feel like his companions are holding him back. He might dance down a deathtrap-laden hall or teleport past it, but his full plate-girded companion is unlikely to follow as easily. In campaigns featuring both scoundrels and nonscoundrels, try to strike a balance between both types of characters and make sure that they realize they're part of the same team. Allow the scoundrel to avoid a trap so he can deactivate it for the others, while his companions cover him with ranged attacks or hold back a deadly creature.

THEMES OF SCOUNDREL ADVENTURES

Scoundrels get involved in any number of gambles, ventures, cons, and schemes that might fall outside the norm of more commonplace adventures. DMs who wish to incorporate scoundrelly themes into their game might consider some of the following possibilities.

ASSASSINATION

Sometimes the best way to deal with a threat is to remove it, precisely and efficiently. Assassination, though often seen as evil, might be the last resort of even the most righteous character.

Magic takes the place of high technology in fantasy assassinations. A wizard or sorcerer is as effective a killer as a member of the assassin prestige class, so assassina-

tion missions are tailor-made for spellcasting scoundrels. Enlarged medium- and long-range spells can place an arcane spellcaster far enough away to make finding him extremely difficult. An enlarged *fireball*, for example, has a range of at least 1,360 feet and explodes exactly where its caster wants it to without need of a ranged attack roll. Less destructive spells also exist, of course, allowing stealthier spellcasters to eliminate a target with relative impunity. Even *magic missile* can be lethal once a caster hits 9th level. *Phantasmal killer* has the same range as *magic missile*, but leaves no visual evidence. At close range, the best spells are those that allow a killer to get into position without being noticed, such as *invisibility* and other illusion spells. The assassin spell list is an excellent source when deciding on appropriate spell selection.

Using a physical weapon instead of a spell lets you slip past magical protections. A bow with the bane special ability and *arrows of slaying*, or a sword with the bane and keen special abilities can bring down most NPCs. Physical weapons, however, can be traced more easily than magical effects: An arrow or crossbow bolt could let a spellcasting investigator use *scrying* on you, while magic melee weapons have distinctive appearances, making them difficult to hide or fence.

CONTRABAND AND SMUGGLING

When wizards can level city blocks with merely a word and monsters can disintegrate with a stare, governments in a fantasy setting would seem to have greater concerns than policing mundane trade. Societies, however, still forbid certain goods, and tax revenue is still vital, so contraband of an unusual nature can exist in a magical world.

Historically, contraband is any illegal sort of goods. Drugs, alcohol, weapons, and slaves are the most familiar examples. Depending on the nature of a society, other items might be banned, censored, or restricted, such as poisons, infectious substances, medicine, destructive materials or creatures, pamphlets, books, music, and other kinds of "offensive" art and technology. In a world filled with magical and monstrous dangers, contraband might also include alchemical substances, destructive magic items, material components for dangerous spells, portable traps, monsters or their body parts, certain holy symbols, gate keys, and even members of specific races.

As a direct result of being outlawed, the value of illegal items increases significantly. Thus, smuggling is a lucrative venture for those who dare to break the law and risk being caught with such goods. In adventures featuring scoundrels, contraband and smuggling can be profitable and exciting; an example might be transporting black onyx gems for use in *animate dead* spells or delivering monstrous prisoners to a slave trader. Good-aligned characters might instead spirit enslaved creatures out of a cruel empire, import works of art into an oppressed city, or help a deposed ruler escape assassination.

With the restriction of certain items comes measures against their use and import, making life as a smuggler difficult and dangerous. Such action might be as simple as guards checking wagons at a city gate and thrusting spears into haystacks, but far more intrusive methods might be the norm in an especially repressive or vigilant nation. These include random searches of private residences, raids on suspected stores and safe houses, pervasive divination magic, and authorities wielding magic items such as *rings of X-ray vision*.

FENCING STOLEN GOODS

Ill-gotten gains (or simply those subject to scrutiny) can be profitable, but finding a buyer is not always easy. And if you are the buyer, you need to take some basic precautions.

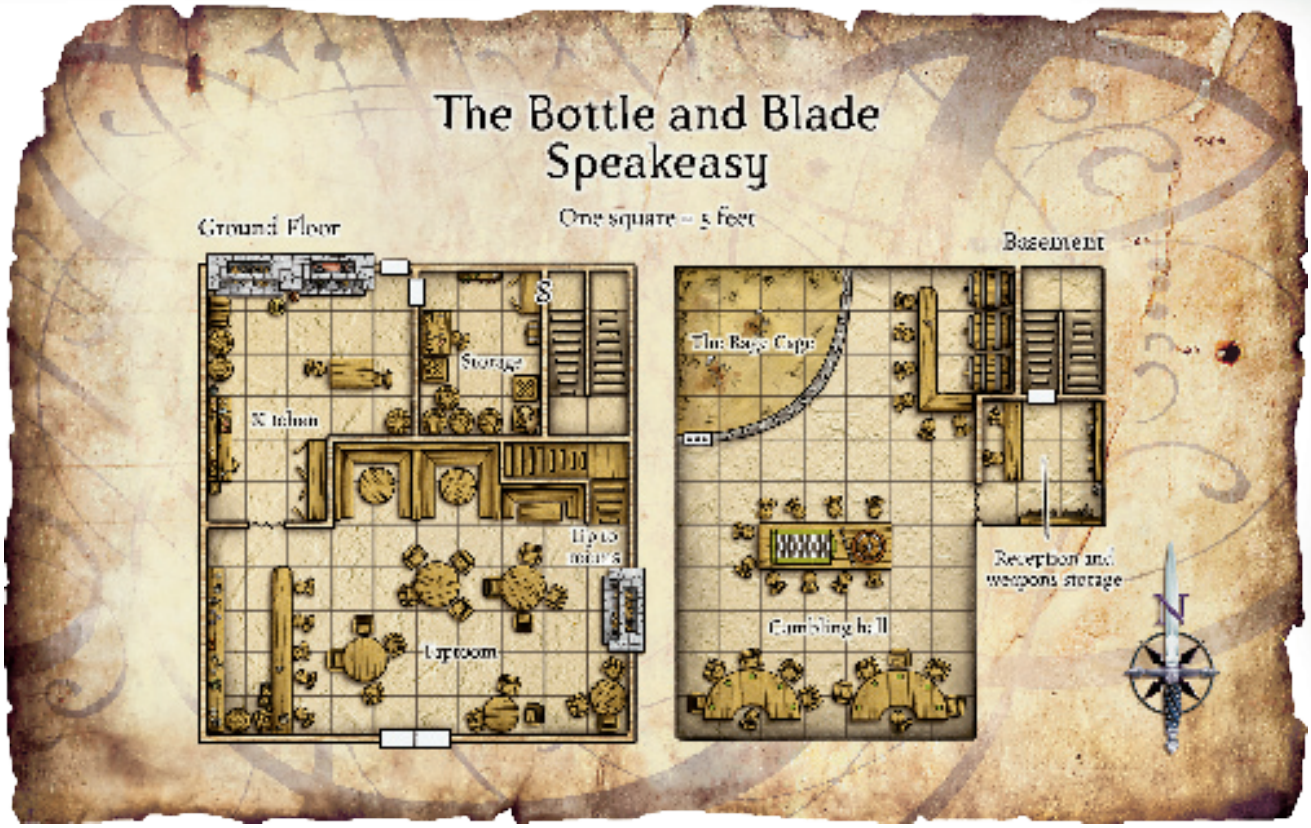
The key to successfully fencing stolen goods is speed and distance. Wise people of wealth know someone who can cast *locate object* in case they lose an item to thievery. That spell has a limited range, however, so taking a valuable item out of a city usually protects the fence or smuggler from it. You can keep a stolen item within its former owner's city if you use some forethought. *Locate object* has a maximum range of 1,200 feet for a 20th-level caster (who usually has better things to do than to try to track down stolen goods); many cities and some larger towns are extensive enough that several castings of the spell would be needed to cover them. In addition, the spell can be stymied by a thin sheet of lead or *polymorph any object*. Keeping the stolen item within a lead-lined box or changing it until the heat dies down fools this otherwise effective method of detection.

Other divination spells can cause trouble if you're not careful. To counter such effects, the best fences have abjuration and illusion magic handy to disguise stolen items or keep them undetectable. Spells as simple as *disguise self* and *obscure object* or as powerful as *mind blank* and *screen* should always be in a fence's arsenal. And under no circumstances should you leave behind a calling card or other personal effect at the scene of a crime, no matter how badly you want the ego boost.

Magic provides excellent ways to transport stolen goods for sale elsewhere and to make the goods easier to sell. Teleportation spells take you to a buyer relatively easily, and *bags of holding* and similar magic can hide stolen items until they are ready to be revealed. When you attempt to sell an item, subtle magic such as *Nystul's magic aura*, *prestidigitation*, and even *silent image* can all contribute to a higher sale price (or disguise an item enough to make it salable).

INTERROGATION

Scoundrels are good at getting information out of people, although their methods can differ widely. In a fantasy world, interrogation often involves magic, though tried-and-true methods such as "good cop–bad cop," or hitting someone until he talks (using nonlethal damage), still work



in a pinch. Regardless of which side of the law they're on, organizations turn to magic for more dependable results, from *zone of truth* and *charm person* to *suggestion* and *dominate person*. A group with enough magical resources can eventually uncover the information it desires.

The least pleasant types of scoundrels use healing magic to free themselves from the bother of dealing only nonlethal damage. Slashing an unfortunate prisoner to within an inch of his life and then magically restoring him to consciousness is enough to weaken the will of most.

Of course, you don't need to rely on magic to convince someone to talk. Using the Intimidate, Bluff, and Diplomacy skills can get all the information you need from NPCs without spending a single spell.

ROMANCE

Scoundrels are expert at using romance and similarly tender feelings to their advantage. Having a tryst with an attractive young noble, seducing a royal consort to influence his spouse, charming a servant to gain access to her master's home—such feigned or temporary flings can be valuable weapons in a charismatic scoundrel's arsenal. Conversely, even a scoundrel might do all for the sake of another, making love a powerful plot device.

Romance in your game can be handled in several ways. Commonly, it is relegated to the realm of a few Charisma-based checks, making such feelings little more than aftereffects of successful Diplomacy or Bluff attempts. Though simplistic, this choice allows players to concentrate more on their characters' goals than on minor details.

Some players and DMs with a personal attachment to the campaign world might have their characters grow to truly care for certain individuals. Besides making the world seem more real, an ongoing romance might give a character a source of information, a protector, an eager supporter, and a home to return to. These comforts are rarely quantifiable, but over the course of a campaign, the aid of a loving spouse, partner, or significant other might make a big difference. In more materialistic terms, an affair with the high priest of the deity of love might yield free healing, while romancing a sorcerer could lead to a steady stream of useful spells.

For a DM, the objects of characters' romantic feelings make tempting targets to imperil and thus motivate PCs. But if a character's every lover immediately becomes the focus of some nefarious plot, that PC will likely shy away from further romantic pursuits. For these same reasons, be wary of PCs trying to cozy up to powerful individuals merely to gain the benefits of their connections, abilities, or possessions. An NPC who discovers that he is being used might be a vindictive jilted lover.

As soon as an in-game romantic liaison appears to be developing, especially of the long-term variety, the DM and players should seriously address the relationship. Few groups are comfortable with detailed specifics of the affair, nor is it fun for other players to sit idly by as the lovers discuss their romance. Therefore, for the sake

of continuing the adventure and the enjoyment of all the players, the details of an ongoing relationship should best happen behind the scenes or "off camera."

ORGANIZATIONS

Scoundrels are attracted to social settings and enjoy the company of quick-thinking colleagues. Their wit and cleverness are largely wasted in seclusion. Thus, scoundrels form or join groups where they can find others with philosophies and goals similar to their own. In such company, they can put their talents to greater use, benefit from the support of like-minded colleagues, and test their skills against ever more trying and rewarding challenges.

The following sample organizations present a few different approaches to the scoundrel archetype, depending on the preferences of the player and her character.

THE FREE LEAGUE

"Only the strong believe in themselves."

—Bria Tomay, former Indep leader

No one knows the truth or is going to make life better for you, so it's best to live your way. This simple belief is the core doctrine of one of the largest and farthest-reaching organizations in all the multiverse.

The Free League, a group of free thinkers, bohemians, and revolutionaries, believes in personal independence as a virtue above all others. The group has no holdings or official leadership, a result of its fierce assertion that no one person can know what is best for other individuals. It is an organization in name only. Its members number all who share a similarly self-reliant spirit and who adopt the group's symbol, a stylized dragon devouring its own tail. These members call themselves "Indeps" (short for "Independents"), and anyone who intrudes on their freedom swiftly realizes that they don't claim this title lightly.

Joining the Free League

The Free League is not divided by lines of race or profession. Anyone who can see the appeal of living free can become a member, and no induction process exists. An Indep who has heard of the league but never met another member belongs to the group just as much as one who spent decades trolling the Great Bazaar in Sigil.

Entry Requirements

Alignment: Any non-evil.

The Free League exists largely as a doctrine by which members live and as a way to aid the oppressed. No member is required to go out of her way to spread the group's dogma, but many are so inspired by the belief that all creatures have a right to be free that they seek to undo the harnesses of the oppressed and persecuted wherever they might find them.

Free League Benefits

Because the Free League includes members from all walks of life, the benefits that specific individuals might provide are varied. What the league itself can provide, however, is absolutely nothing. It has no structure and offers no official support. However, few Indeps turn away a fellow member in need. Because all the following benefits rely on the good will of individual members, a character must be on affable terms with those granting aid. Only NPCs with friendly or better attitudes grant the noted services and information. Often merely knowing that someone is an Indep is enough to elicit a friendly response, but some particularly private, accidentally wronged, or merely busy members might turn away their fellows. Aiding members in need is a secondary tenet of the Free League, a fact wisely remembered by all seeking to impose on their fellows.

Services: Indeps regularly offer colleagues general support. Even the lowliest member can usually provide a good meal, a bed, a place to heal, or a place to hide. Wherever Indeps gather, they can feel as though they're among family and those who will watch out for them. League members provide this support to other Indeps whenever they are able, but they refuse to be taken advantage of. The organization does not long tolerate those who abuse another member's good will or make a burden of themselves without some sort of payment, regardless of shared ideals.

Many Indeps grant fellow members a discount on their services, whatever they might be, from simple blacksmithing to casting spells. League members typically sell their wares or services to other Indeps at a 20% discount.

Gear: The Free League counts numerous rebels and isolationists among its members. Such Indeps keep stocks of weaponry in preparation for coming conflicts or merely for their own needs. Sometimes fellow members can borrow these provisions if they can convince an owner they'll be put to good use.

Should an Indep PCs encounter a member with a reason to have an arsenal—even if that reason is merely paranoia—she might be able to borrow any weapon, piece of armor, or item that she needs and that the owner is willing to part with. The Indep must have an attitude of helpful to even consider lending his supplies to other members. What is kept within these caches varies from member to member and depends on the owner's reasons for keeping them. Thus, an isolationist might store food and supplies, whereas a resister could be stockpiling weapons for the coming revolution. An Indep cache usually contains a total of 300 gp worth of simple and martial weapons, light and medium armor, and useful adventuring gear (primarily rations). Particularly well-stocked stores might include up to 1,200 gp worth of minor magic items, often potions or scrolls.

Information: While the Free League has no organized method of communication, members travel and regularly meet other members. Some even wander the

planes, passing along news from lands far, wide, and even beyond imagining. Any member of the Free League a PC encounters has a 25% chance of having heard tidbits of information about local or planar happenings. PCs gain a +5 bonus on Knowledge (geography), Knowledge (local), and Knowledge (the planes) checks made with the help of such knowledgeable Indeps.

Being part of an organization that was birthed on the Outer Planes, Indeps know of local planar gates, where they lead, and how to activate them. Again, 25% of league members possess such knowledge and are willing to pass it on to fellow members.

Status: Indeps are beloved by underdogs and the oppressed, but are feared and hated by those in power. Members of the Free League typically gain a +2 circumstance bonus on interaction checks when dealing with rebels and freedom fighters, but take a –2 circumstance penalty when dealing with political leaders, nobles, and the wealthy.

Symbol of the Free League

Playing an Indep

Indeps value freedom and personal independence over all other things. While they understand the benefits and necessity of some aspects of government, they openly scoff at powerful individuals who claim to know what's best for their people or seek to lead their followers to some vague greater tomorrow. Indeps believe that no one knows what a person wants or how to better attain one's goals than that individual, and that each person has a right to seek happiness in one's own way, without interference from others or some self-important government. The group doesn't tout this philosophy as an excuse for lawlessness or debauchery, though, for such chaos can interfere with the happiness of others just as easily as a strict regime can. Rather, the Free League values personal privacy, acceptance of—or at least noninterference with—one's neighbors, and the right to come and go as one pleases. The league also acknowledges that sometimes people need help, and those who share the same ideas should aid their advancement. Just as good neighbors help one another, so do Indeps strive to help their fellows in ways that don't interfere with either party's needs or wishes.

As an Indep, nothing is more important to you than freedom—not just your own, but the concept and the right of all creatures to be free. Some characters might take their belief to extremes, seeking to liberate caged animals and mistreated pets, but most care primarily about the rights of sentient creatures. You have little patience for laws or bureaucracy. Although you don't go out of your way to break local rules, you vehemently oppose unjust edicts, as well as elitism, slavery, and bigotry in all its forms. This attitude might earn you the enmity of those in power, but you can often find support among the downtrodden and the oppressed. Because you do not work toward some greater end, some see you as flightily indulging your whims and desires. Such pitiable folk are shackled by self-imposed responsibilities and speak out of envy. Perhaps your sense of personal freedom and self-worth can lead them to a more enlightened, enjoyable state.

Indeps are as much philosophers as they are wanderers and freedom fighters. Thus, you might be quick to debate your group's beliefs with both your allies and your enemies, ever trying to win others over to your way of thinking. The more rigid the opponent's thinking, the greater the challenge to your ideals, and thus the sweeter the victory when you change her mind.

Combat: An Indep's tactics in combat largely depend on who or what she's fighting against. While they are not pacifists, the live-and-let-live attitude of group members leads them to avoid physical conflict. If forced into a fight with another thinking creature, an Indep tries to land a few solid blows and then extricate herself, or use nonlethal damage to incapacitate her opponent.

When someone tries to rob an Indep or others of their freedom, she becomes a much more tenacious opponent. The misguided and short-sighted receive sound thrashings—especially when they make pests of themselves—though these beatings rarely amount to anything serious. Bigots and heavy-handed law enforcers provoke an Indep's wrath much more easily. Willing to die to defend their freedoms, Indeps are also willing to kill to protect those rights. Members of the Free League are not anarchists or murderers, but neither do they allow strength or numbers to deter them when they encounter such close-minded fools.

Every now and then a purposeful Indep might make it her mission to bring down a tyrant or criminal leader. In such cases, stealth, deadly sniper shots, and willingness for self-sacrifice are the ways of these guerrilla fighters.

Advancement: Joining the Free League is as simple as meeting a member, discovering a shared state of mind, and putting on the symbol of the faction. The group has no formal induction and no list of members. Indeps share only a devout belief in the right of all sentient creatures to be free and live as they choose.

The group's primary principles are noninterference and the right of each member to do as she pleases. As an offshoot of this philosophy, the league holds no meetings, has no forced obligations, no dues, nor any other rules or requirements. No one polices the members, since some-

Illus. by M. Coimbra

one without the proper mentality to be an Indep either wouldn't join in the first place, or is likely to have his badge removed by another member.

The Free League has no true leaders, but occasionally members of particular vision and magnetism attract a following. Such influential figures motivate their fellow Indeps to greater deeds, such as establishing their philosophy in a close-minded city or discrediting a corrupt leader. Indeps who follow these members do so not out of obligation, but of their own free will.

Missions: Although the Free League itself imposes no tasks upon its members, many Indeps take to lives of travel, exploration, and adventure. Embracing the spirit of freedom, they go where the winds blow them, spreading knowledge of their philosophy as they wander. These Indeps also seek to stamp out minor restrictive forces along the way, including corrupt officials, overzealous priests, thuggish sheriffs, and others who would steal the rights of the people.

Throughout the planes, but especially in the gate town of Tradegate on the Concordant Domain of the Outlands, Indeps make lives for themselves as traders and explorers. They are some of the few folk willing (or crazy enough) to delve into the depths of the Lower Planes. They are no fools, though, and always set out fully equipped to survive and escape. Their free spirits also seem to afford them some physiological protection against the soul-crushing oppressiveness of those planes.

Responsibilities: Indeps have no duties beyond those they choose. To impose responsibilities on Free League members would be hypocritical, and the far-flung, informal nature of the group would make any sort of unified decision or requirement meaningless. Despite having no official requirements, Indeps help fellow members whenever possible as a matter of honor and kinship. Members provide what aid they can, which might range from helping at another member's shop to fighting by her side against enemies, depending on the Indep's capabilities.

The Free League in the World

"Think for yourself! Don't listen to me!"

—Valek Xander, Indep wanderer

Members of the Free League might appear anywhere. Since the group has no rigid organization or responsibilities, any individual could be a member. Whether in the outspoken philosophizing of a planar traveler or the quiet determination of a local baker, the vibrant spirit of freedom and independence flourishes in brutally oppressed communities and in unlikely souls. Even where no one speaks out about such matters, the symbol of the dragon eating its tail emblazoned on a storefront or scrawled on an alley wall serves as a sign of hope and aid to the free-willed.

Structure: The Free League is an organization in name only. It has no central decision-making body, no means of widespread communication, and members scattered across the innumerable planes. Only Indeps' shared dedication to the group's ideals and to each other makes the league a reality.

The history of the Free League can be traced back through the centuries to the earliest days of Sigil, the City of Doors (see the *Planar Handbook* supplement for more information). For centuries Sigil's people were divided among dozens of factions, groups, and cliques that held control over particular parts of the city. One such group was the Free League, which existed then much as it does now: unorganized, open-minded, and above all, free.

Eventually the Lady of Pain, the enigmatic ruler of Sigil, grew tired of the constantly skirmishing factions within her city and demanded that the groups reduce their number to a mere fifteen within a week's time, on penalty of death. Thousands died as groups fled the city, warred against each other, or disbanded. The Free League fared the best during the resulting chaos, attracting free thinkers and open-minded creatures of all walks—if only to be part of something while weathering the storm of the faction purge. For a time the Free League counted more than a million badge-wearing members in Sigil alone.

Over the centuries, the number of Indeps decreased. The flighty nature of its members, gradual attrition, biased arrests by lawful organizations, and, some even say, a mysterious plague weakened the ranks of the Free League. Yet, with their decentralized membership and lack of communication, few Indeps ever noticed the thinning of their ranks.

In recent memory, several leaders have appeared among the group, specifically a skilled bard, Bria Tomay, and a pair of twin wemics, Lethea and Lesander. Noticing the disappearance of their friends from the streets and alleys of the Great Bazaar, the focal point of the faction's influence in Sigil, these charismatic leaders set to organizing secret meetings among their fellows with the hopes of discovering the reason.

Bria and the wemics never found their answer, though. Each of the trio was banished to an inescapable extradimensional maze by the Lady of Pain in the first days of the chaotic Faction War, when all factions were ultimately exiled from Sigil. By the war's culmination, the Free League's leaders were lost and its members banished from the City of Doors. This situation meant little to the Indeps, though. Their ideology blended well with the purely natural plane of the Outlands, and cast-off members found a new home there, while countless others relocated to other planes and Material worlds, ultimately spreading their group's dogma. Many even remained in Sigil, claiming that the Free League had never been much of a true faction to begin with. Though they removed their badges, they did not change their ways. Even now, after all the Free League has experienced, the group is little different from what it was when the dragon devouring itself was first seen centuries ago.

NPC Reactions: Members of the Free League are usually either well accepted or ignored. Because the group has no formal opinions and performs no official acts, no one can really approve or disapprove of its doings. Thus, people's opinions of the organization stem from their experiences with specific Indeps they've known or heard about. Since league members keep to themselves or seek out ways to promote free thought, Indeps are at best considered free spirits and beneficent philosophers, and at worst vagabonds and troublemakers.

While these are the opinions of commoners, some in positions of power see the Free League as a significant threat. Tyrants paint Indeps as rabble-rousers, anarchists, and regicides, and imprison or assassinate anyone wearing the Free League dragon.

Free League Lore

Characters with ranks in Knowledge (local) or Knowledge (the planes) can research the Free League to learn more about it. When a character succeeds on a skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 10: The Free League is a group of freedom fighters and fiercely independent individuals. Members are quick to speak out against unjust laws, controlling politicians, and corrupt regimes.

DC 15: The Free League has no central base or leadership, just a large body of similarly minded members. These members call themselves Independents, or Indeps.

DC 20: The Free League was once one of the factions that controlled the planar metropolis of Sigil. It was recently banished, however, along with all the other factions, and now many Indeps make their home in the gatetown of Tradegate on the Outlands.

DC 30: Characters who achieve this level of success can learn important details about specific Indeps in your campaign, including their recent works and the areas they frequent.

Setting up a meeting with an Indep is often as easy as coming across one on the road or entering one's shop. In areas where personal freedoms are oppressed and members of the Free League are forced underground, the best chance of finding a group leader is in seeking out agitators, rebel cells, and places branded with graffiti of the Indep dragon.

Free League Territory

The Free League claims no territory aside from those homes, shops, and lands under the ownership of its members, and it guards those fiercely. The greatest numbers of Indeps, however, are on the Concordant Domain of the Outlands. There, on the plane of absolute neutrality, the live-and-let-live attitude of the Free League is not just accepted, it fundamentally suffuses the fabric of the very land. Indeps and their symbols can be found in almost every settlement across the plane, but the largest community resides in the faction's newly adopted home, the gate town of Tradegate. Surrounding a permanent portal

Illus. by E. Deschamps

Valek Xander, an Indep

to the neutral good-aligned plane of Bytopia, Tradegate embodies the spirit of openness, freedom, and communal aid that members of the Free League believe in so fervently. From here, and through the countless other portals scattered across the Outlands, Indeps travel to innumerable places on the Material Plane, making their homes where they choose and where they are needed.

Indeps in the Game

The Free League allows for a connection to the greater world, even the multiverse, in even the quietest burg. With its vast membership and appealing tenets, the league gives the simplest commoner on the Material Plane a reason to know about happenings on the Outer Planes and perhaps even knowledge of how a party might become involved.

Indeps are also the first to chafe under a strict government. Even if you don't want to involve your campaign in planar concerns, the Free League makes a perfect, world-spanning rebellious organization quick to act against tyrants and plan all manner of dissent. Rebellion-minded Indeps often work in secret and thus might use PCs, particularly scoundrels, for any number of subtle, subversive, or disruptive goals.

Adaptation: With very few changes, the Free League can be adapted to nearly any campaign. Stripping the group of its planar connection allows you to involve PCs in freedom-fighting adventures without becoming sidetracked by the potential of the Outer Planes. You might also want to provide league members with some means of magical communication, allowing members to organize and work against injustice in a more focused, effective manner across an entire world. An interesting variant is to make the Free League a kind of planar "Underground Railroad," smuggling the oppressed and exploited though a series of safe houses to a planar gate leading to ultimate freedom, worlds away from any pursuit.

Sample Encounter: PCs might become involved with the Free League in a multitude of ways, whether through merely hearing about the group from a traveling member, becoming involved in a fight against a tyrannical government, or following the league's exile from Sigil.

EL 14: Valek Xander was once a recruiter for the league but left Sigil along with so many other Indeps. He decided to do a bit of wandering through the multiverse and see whatever it had to offer. He made his way to several worlds, touting the Free League's tenets, and eventually ended up in a large but oppressed city where his open philosophizing was taken as rabble-rousing. He was swiftly imprisoned. Calling upon the aid of a friendly steam mephit named Huozodruzil, the Indep instructed the little outsider to find some free-minded individuals in the city to help him escape. As luck would have it, the mephit stumbles across the PCs.

Valek Xander — CR 14

Male tiefling rogue 8/gatecrasher 5*
*Prestige class from *Manual of the Planes*
CG Medium outsider (native)
Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +8, Spot +12
Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Common, Ignan, Infernal

AC 20, touch 13, flat-footed 17; Dodge, Mobility, improved uncanny dodge
(+3 Dex, +5 armor, +2 natural)
hp 48 (13 HD)
Resist cold 5, electricity 5, fire 5; evasion
Fort +3, **Ref** +15, **Will** +8

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee *+2 silvered rapier* +11 (1d6+1/18–20)
Ranged *+1 anarchic light crossbow* +15 (1d8+1/19–20)
Base Atk +9; **Grp** +9
Atk Options sneak attack +4d6
Special Actions *summon spell dampening 3/day*
Combat Gear *potion of haste, wand of cat's grace* (33 charges)
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 14th):
5/day—*analyze portal**
1/day—*darkness*
*Spell described in *Manual of the Planes*

Abilities Str 11, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 15
SQ open portal, trap sense +2, trapfinding

Feats Dodge, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Run

Skills Appraise +5, Balance +7, Bluff +23, Decipher Script +5, Diplomacy +25, Disable Device +7, Disguise +10 (+12 acting), Gather Information +16, Hide +5, Intimidate +6, Jump +2, Knowledge (local) +13, Knowledge (the planes) +11, Listen +8, Move Silently +11, Open Lock +20, Sense Motive +16, Spot +12, Survival +2 (+4 on other planes), Tumble +15, Use Magic Device +12

Possessions combat gear plus *+3 leather armor, +2 silvered rapier, +1 anarchic light crossbow* with 40 bolts, *amulet of natural armor +2, ring of freedom of movement, rod of flame extinguishing, potion of water breathing,* masterwork thieves' tools, pendant with the symbol of the Free League

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Summon Spell Dampening (Su) Conjuration (summoning) and (calling) spells are suppressed within 100 feet of Valek for 10 rounds.

Open Portal (Su) As a full-round action, Valek can force open a planar gate or portal by making a successful Open Lock check, using his Int modifier instead of his Dex modifier. The portal remains open for 1d4+1 rounds.

THE BLIND TOWER

"If you sign on the dotted line, you can consider it as good as done."
—Mistress Eve, Blind Tower agent, closing a deal

The Blind Tower began with a crime spree that never ended. More than thirty years ago a single, daring cat burglar ransacked scores of heavily guarded vaults and noble treasuries. Today, that famous rogue leads an empire that has stretched beyond mere prowling and larceny, becoming an army of the most skilled and professional thieves, daredevils, adventurers, and assassins ever organized. The Blind Tower commands a view of the entire world's intrigues, but within its own walls it sees nothing at all.

Joining the Blind Tower

The Blind Tower has need for talented characters of all types. Because the group prides itself on its versatility and ability to accomplish any goal, any exceptional individual with a willingness to accept daring—if morally questionable—missions might excel as an agent of the Blind Tower.

Entry Requirements

Base attack bonus +3 OR
Any four skills 6 ranks each OR
Ability to cast 2nd-level spells.
Special: Must have completed an act of skill great enough to have attracted the attention of the Blind Tower.
Special: Must have completed an introductory mission for the Blind Tower.

The Blind Tower exists as a dual business venture and information network for its founder, Mister Dark. Aside from this, it allows some of the most talented and daring individuals in the world to test and improve their skills while making a tidy profit, regardless of their professions. Diverse talents both mundane and extraordinary are required to accomplish all the missions the organization is hired to perform. Fighter or cleric, rogue or mage, nearly anyone with the ability to keep a secret and skills considered "Blind Tower quality" might become a useful member of this elusive organization.

The Blind Tower doesn't insist that every agent serve it exclusively, although those who wish to do so can usually find enough work from its missions alone. The organization encourages members to go out and spread the word of its prowess by example.

Blind Tower Agent Benefits

The Blind Tower realizes that its members require support, information, and the best equipment available to complete assignments others might consider impossible. Thus, agents of the Blind Tower have access to a wide range of benefits.

Gear: The organization's main arsenal can be found at the Blind Tower itself (see Headquarters, page 136). Nearly

CASING THE BANK

1st Night
- Bank closes, 5 bells—last customer leaves minutes later
- Employees: two female humans, one male gnome, one male dwarf; leave half-hour after closing
- Manager, male dwarf, leaves after 7 bells
- No traffic 7 to 8 bells
- Beggar sleeps on step, just before 9 bells
- No traffic 10 to 11 bells
- Bar around corner starts to empty just before midnight

2nd Night
- Same close, same departures
- Light traffic 7 to 8, no traffic 8 to 9
- Beggar sleeps on step, just after 9 bells
- Light to no traffic 10 to 11 bells

3rd Night
- Same close, employees stay longer, empty by 7 bells
- No traffic 7 to 9 bells
- Light traffic 9 to 10 bells, beggar arrives but leaves
- No traffic 10 to 11

4th Night
- All employees leave by 7 bells
- No traffic 7 to 8 bells
- Light traffic after 8 bells—festival?

5th Night
- Same close, employees stay to 6 bells
- Looks same—beggar? Seems gone

6th Night
- Nothing new to report—recommend go with plan

any weapon of masterwork quality, even several of magical nature, might be found in the group's stores, along with armor, adventuring gear, and minor, reusable magic items. A member can, at any time, borrow up to 3,000 gp worth of equipment from the Blind Tower. These items are considered to be on loan for one mission and must be returned upon its completion.

As a character grows in experience and influence, he might be afforded special permission to take items of greater value from the group's stores, but always with the stipulation that such resources be returned so other members can later make use of them. The Blind Tower does not lend out single-use magic items or alchemical gear. Equipment is to be borrowed only for use on missions assigned by the Blind Tower.

Besides the stores in the Blind Tower itself, the organization maintains small troves of gear in other cities. Tower agents who succeed on a DC 20 Knowledge (local) check know the location of the nearest cache. These stores usually hold 5,000 gp worth of equipment. Just as at the Blind Tower, these troves are monitored by their guardians, and anyone who makes use of them is expected to return what they take. The contents of these caches are variable and might even include single-use items. Those who borrow from these troves can replace items with gear of equal value if they cannot return exactly what they borrowed.

Services: Blind Tower agents might take advantage of their fellow members' skills in a variety of fields. Though many are quite profit-minded in their dealings, even with other members, Blind Tower agents usually offer other agents a 50% discount on their services.

Information: The Blind Tower has agents spread all over the world who make regular reports containing useful information. Any Blind Tower agent who makes a Knowledge check at the Blind Tower headquarters gains the benefit of her peers' vast and varied experience and information, gaining a +2 circumstance bonus. This bonus increases to +5 for Knowledge (geography) and Knowledge (local) checks.

Status: Agents of the Blind Tower gain a +2 circumstance bonus on interactions with members of organized criminal groups and with wealthy or noble individuals not directly related to the government.

Playing a Blind Tower Agent

Agents of the Blind Tower are the best at what they do and have been accepted into the organization for that reason. Given a place where they can continually test and improve upon their skills, as well as draw on near-unlimited resources, agents are expected to offer their services to any employer willing to pay. The Blind Tower also demands complete discretion about a member's fellow agents, the group's resources and holdings, and their employer's privacy.

Unemotional and secretive, even with fellow members, few within the Blind Tower could say that they're friends with their peers. While there are some exceptions, especially in the case of those who work well together and team up regularly, the organization is run strictly as a business, with the completion of missions and the furthering of group goals taking precedence over any individual.

All members of the Blind Tower are mercenaries. As an agent, you must eventually decide how far you are willing to go in service to the group. A skilled thief might have little problem with breaking into countless homes of the rich and pompous, but turning those larcenous skills against the truly needy merely to complete a mission might cause that same thief to question her allegiance. Sometimes you have to choose between your ethical code and a lucrative but immoral order, such as kidnapping or assassination—even if saying no means turning your allies into enemies and earning the wrath of a powerful and far-reaching organization.

Combat: Blind Tower operatives avoid combat as often as possible. In situations when battle becomes necessary, they end such encounters as swiftly and as quietly as they can. Sometimes a specific mission calls for the retrieval of wayward individuals, in which case members seek ways to incapacitate their targets harmlessly.

Advancement: Only those with remarkable skill and promise are brought into the ranks of the Blind Tower. Potential members do not simply join; they're selected. Those who demonstrate exceptional talent and a capacity for subtlety, loyalty, and discretion are sought out by high-ranking agents of the Tower, who hire the prospect to fulfill some trying mission. Ideally, this mission tests several aspects of the would-be member's abilities. Always, it puts him in a position that tries his prudence and ability to keep a secret. The mission is often a scam, with the destination and people involved all being assets of the Blind Tower. Those who pass the trial receive a letter of congratulations, signed by Mister Dark, with directions to the elusive organization's headquarters.

Although most of its members are chosen, a rare few seek out the Blind Tower in hope of gaining entry. This act is a feat in itself, and those who successfully reach the tower gate alive are considered for membership if that is what they wish. Those lacking talent, however, and those who do not wish to join often become food for the abundant local alligators.

Each member receives a name, often a relevant yet nondescript item prefaced by the honorific "Mister" or "Mistress" (such as Mister Wand, Mistress Balcony, or Mister Axe). After joining the Blind Tower, agents are never referred to by their real names. No rank or distinction exists among members, although those with greater age, ability, and experience merit greater respect among the group's ranks. The three most senior members serve as the day-to-day leaders of the organization: stern and intimidating Mister Tower, charming and seductive Mistress Eve,

and cruel, poison-loving Mister Dagger. This trio is second only to Mister Dark himself, and they are the only ones allowed into his private sanctum (see Structure, below).

Missions: Individual members or small groups are regularly sent out on specific missions, prearranged by another member who was likely assigned to set up such tasks. All missions are assigned by Mister Tower, Mistress Eve, or Mister Dagger. These missions often involve retrieving lost items or stealing back stolen goods, finding (and sometimes kidnapping) "lost" parties, breaking into vaults to test their defenses, and spying. Members are not allowed to take anything from the target other than what they've been sent to acquire, no matter what else is available, unless the contract so stipulates.

Responsibilities: Above all other duties, members of the Blind Tower are expected to be discreet. No matter how potentially lucrative the revelation might be, they must keep the secrets of their employers, of discoveries made on missions, and of the Tower itself. Those who breach this barrier of professional secrecy might become the targets of their peers' next assignments.

The Blind Tower in the World

"*We didn't see anything we weren't paid to.*"
—Mister Tower, after successfully testing and overcoming the defenses of the royal vault

The Blind Tower is a two-faced organization. It hires out talent to those who lawfully seek the abilities of skilled detectives and daredevils, but it also provides cunning bounty hunters, thieves, and brigands to anyone with enough coin to pay. Thus the Blind Tower's services fall within a moral and legal gray area, and might aid the truly desperate as often as the truly criminal. Members and those who employ the organization alike face the quandary of being involved with the best in the business, despite the moral questions raised by the group's mercenary nature.

Structure: Thirty years ago, the famed Halzo family sapphires went missing in what was called a daring robbery. A week later, the holy and penetrating *Eyes of Wee Jas* vanished in an incredible heist. And when the royally guarded golden bodies of the Seven Icons of the Sphinx were absconded with, everyone spoke of the "crime spree of the century." No one knew who was stealing the finest and most valuable art objects in the capital, but gone they were, and even the finest detective work and the most powerful divinations were unable to find a suspect. Finally even the royal vault was infiltrated. Though the thief chose to take the original *Illustrated Symphony* of Tvash-Prull instead of a library of military and royal dirty secrets, at that point the crime spree became a matter of national concern.

For nearly a year, no treasure was safe. Millions of gold pieces' worth of fine art disappeared. A few reports of a suspicious-looking, shadowy form near the scenes of the crimes gave rise to stories about the "dark man." Eventually as the unstoppable thief's exploits were practically serialized in weekly broadsheets, this elusive figure became known among the public as "Mister Dark."

The Blind Tower

Then suddenly, less than a month before the anniversary of his first theft, Mister Dark's crime wave inexplicably stopped. Rumors variously claimed that the master burglar had been quietly captured and imprisoned, disintegrated without a trace while infiltrating some noble's vault, or met with an even more outlandish ends to explain the spree's apparent cessation. Regardless of the reason, art collectors, curators, wealthy families, and guards across the city breathed easier with Mister Dark's disappearance.

At least they did until four years ago.

In one night nearly every criminal organization, shrine of Olidammara, and noble family with illicit dealings received a formal letter of introduction from a mysterious organization calling itself the Blind Tower. This group offered the services of its skilled and discreet members as retrievers of lost items, testers of defenses and security systems, information gatherers, and bounty hunters for

Illus. by H. Lyon

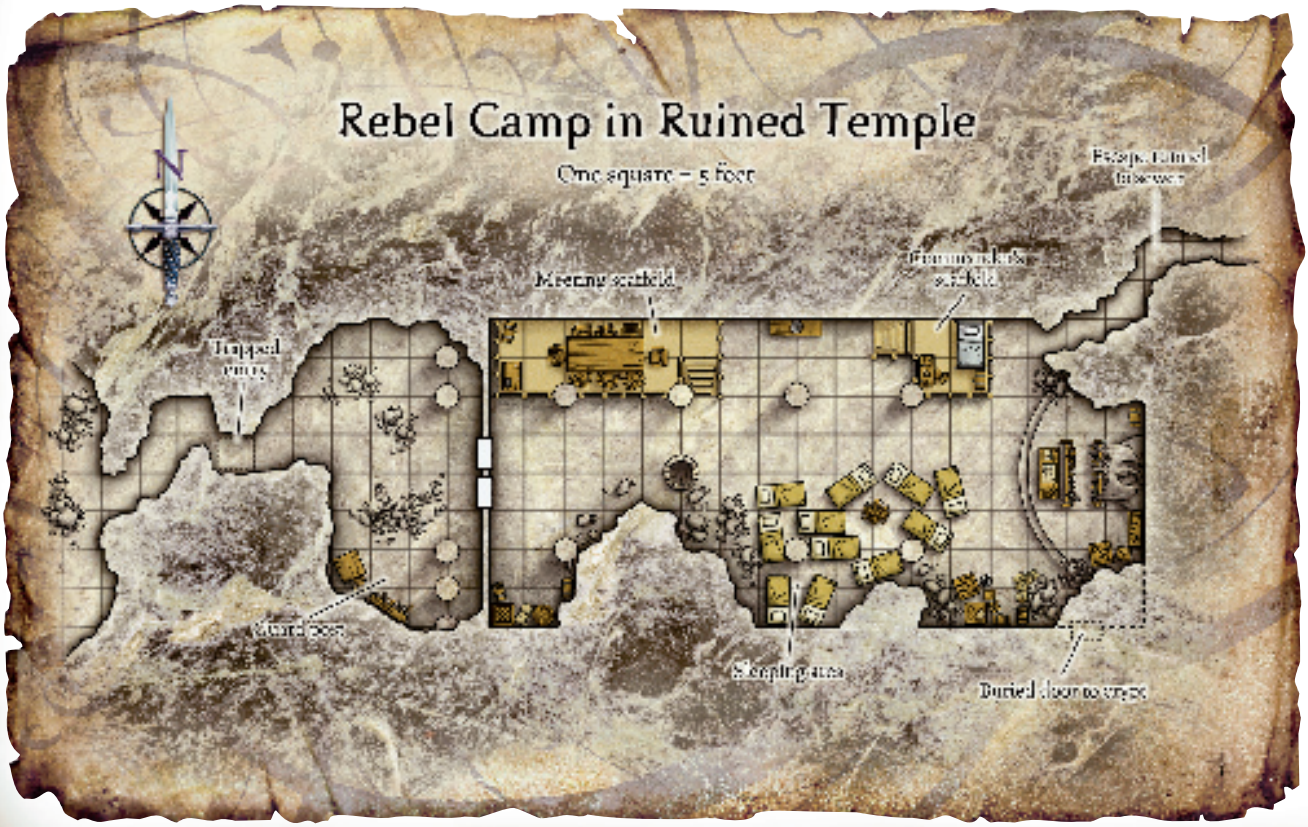
hire. The letters offered no means of contracting the strange organization, but each was signed "Mister Dark." Questions of authenticity were soon dismissed: Those who honestly sought the organization's services were soon contacted, while governmental searches were wholly unsuccessful.

The Blind Tower's reach expands beyond the boundaries of any one country. Someone seeking its services need merely make his intentions publicly known, usually by inquiring openly about the group. Those whose needs are judged legitimate—and worthy of the Blind Tower's service—are approached by a formally garbed and charming representative named with the honorific "Mister" or "Mistress." This person considers the would-be employer's needs and sets the group's terms and price, to be paid in advance. The cost is exorbitant, but the Blind Tower promises success within one week and absolute discretion. If the organization is unable to fulfill its side of the bargain, the employer receives his total investment back along with the failed and renounced agent or agents, to do with as he pleases. So far, though, the Blind Tower has never failed.

The Blind Tower is a strange combination of thieves' guild and spy network for hire, so efficient that even families and empires once wronged by its founder have made use of its services. Every job expands the group's resources and growing influence. Yet why the Blind Tower exists remains a mystery. Some whisper that the organization is merely a front for a crime so complex, so incredible that even the invincible Mister Dark has spent thirty years in its planning.

NPC Reactions: Few besides the criminal and social elite even know the Blind Tower exists, and among both of these groups opinions vary. The wealthy and noble hold the opinion that the Blind Tower is nothing more than a thieves' guild playing at respectability, though all hold their purse strings a little tighter when they speak ill of the group. Criminals either respect and envy the organization for its quiet efficiency, or see it as holier-than-thou competition that could use its pretty face smeared in the mud.

Headquarters: The illicit empire takes its name from the ominous and elusive structure called the Blind Tower. Located deep within a swamp upon a marshy hillock, it was once a border fortress for some long-forgotten empire. The squat, eight-story tower juts from the ruins of a larger building, overgrown with vines and ages of swampy decay. The scars of an ancient fire still mar its stone, making it look disused and abandoned. Within, the Blind Tower has no floors, the wooden interiors long since decayed and cleared away. Instead, the interior is an incredibly intricate mesh of scaffolds, knotted ropes, hammocks, and poles in which the tower's members train, report, rest, and leave with hardly a sound. Permanent magical effects cover large swaths of the vast space, including *alarm* spells, areas of perpetual *silence*, and banks of mist and darkness. The most noteworthy magic occupies one of the tower's top corners, where a rickety-looking scaffold offers access to a flimsy plank door. Within is a permanent *Mordenkainen's magnificent mansion*, where the members of



the inner circle plot and deal, and where the elusive Mister Dark purportedly makes his home.

The grounds, hill, and marshes surrounding the Blind Tower are riddled with discarded statuary stolen from temples, castles, ancient ruins, and any number of other sites. Scattered and awkwardly placed, these sculptures make the area around the already sinister tower look like a massive, forgotten graveyard. These statues were acquired expressly at Mister Dark's request, a product of the master thief's grim sense of aesthetics, but some say, also to disguise the tower's hidden guardians.

The region around the Blind Tower is constantly patrolled by hidden members, usually initiates training in stealth, but also a number of deadly wilderness masters. The traps laid by practicing members, as well as the natural hazards of the swamp, make a single boggy and constantly watched road the only practical path to the Blind Tower.

Blind Tower Lore

Characters with ranks in Knowledge (history) and Knowledge (local) can research the Blind Tower to learn more about it. When a character succeeds on a skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 15: The Blind Tower is a group of investigators, spies, housebreakers, daredevils, and thieves-for-hire that prides itself on discretion in performing illegal and semilegal activities. Anyone who makes serious inquiries about hiring its services is soon approached by a member, ready to discuss terms of a contract.

DC 20: The Blind Tower is supposedly funded and run by the master criminal Mister Dark, who went on an unstoppable crime spree thirty years ago.

DC 25: All members of the Blind Tower have strange and distinctive names, such as Mistress Picks or Mister Gallows.

DC 30: Characters who achieve this level of success learn of the organization's recent missions and successes, hear gossip about who might be members of the group, and might even piece together hints about the location of the Blind Tower itself.

To meet with a member of the Blind Tower, all one must do is openly inquire about contacting the group anywhere frequented by criminals and the well-informed. If the inquirer and the task are deemed worthy of the group's attention, an agent of the Tower pays a visit to the potential employer soon after.

Blind Tower Agents in the Game

Only recently organized and operating in the shadows, the Blind Tower might well have been working behind the scenes of your campaign all along. The organization is purposely elusive and caters only to the worthy and elite, so it might seek to hire PCs for missions or even recruit them after some display of extraordinary skill. Alternatively, the PCs might be hired by some group with a long memory or that wishes the return of an item stolen by Mister Dark, which could lead them to confront one of the most secretive criminal organizations in the world.

Adaptation: Any number of small adjustments can make the Blind Tower better suit your game. It's quite possible that Mister Dark has nothing to do with the Blind Tower and that his name is merely being used by his three supposed lieutenants. Alternatively, Mister Tower, Mistress Eve, and Mister Dagger might be Mister Dark's apprentices or children and continue his work, communing in a magical sanctum that is in fact an extraplanar tomb.

The Blind Tower might also be the contract spy agency of a national government, or could serve any government for the right price. The group might even be a cover for more sinister deals, performing semibenevolent work to hide its vast information-gathering about some great conspiracy or world secret.

Sample Encounter: The easiest way to become involved with the Blind Tower is through an agent of that group who has heard about and been impressed by some of the past exploits of the PCs. The agent might have a mission for the characters, whether to see just how good they are or to test them as part of some sort of Tower plot.

Alternatively, if the PCs have caught the eye of someone important or robbed a powerful individual, the Blind Tower now stalks the party to collect information or retrieve its employer's possessions.

EL 7: The PCs find that the Blind Tower has been watching them. After some particularly daring stunt or lucrative haul, one of the party members is stopped on the street by a beautiful woman with short-cropped blonde hair. Smiling, she informs the PC that she's been waiting for him, congratulates him on a job well done, hands him a letter, and leans in to kiss him on the cheek. The physicality lets her get close enough to use Sleight of Hand to steal something valuable from him before she slips away. The letter details a mission and is signed "Mister Dark." This mission, of course, is a sham arranged by the Blind Tower and is meant to test the PCs, as is the theft of the target's item. The elusive Mistress Eve slips away, reappearing in a different guise to induct another member elsewhere.

Mistress Eve — CR 7

Female human bard 4/rogue 3
N Medium humanoid
Init +2; **Senses** Listen +6, Spot +6
Languages Common, Undercommon

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14; Dodge, Mobility
(+2 Dex, +3 armor, +1 deflection)
hp 34 (7 HD)
Resist evasion
Fort +3, **Ref** +9, **Will** +7

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee short sword +6 (1d6+1/19–20)
Ranged *+1 light crossbow* +8 (1d8+1/19–20)
Base Atk +5; **Grp** +6
Atk Options Combat Reflexes, sneak attack +2d6

Special Actions bardic music 4/day (countersong, *fascinate* 2 creatures, inspire competence, inspire courage +1)
Combat Gear *potion of aid, potion of cure moderate wounds, potion of displacement*
Bard Spells Known (CL 4th):
2nd (1/day)—*cat's grace, detect thoughts* (DC 15)
1st (3/day)—*charm person* (DC 14), *disguise self, undetectable alignment*
0 (3/day)—*dancing lights, ghost sound, know direction, lullaby* (DC 13), *mage hand, message*

Abilities Str 13, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 17
SQ bardic knowledge +5, trap sense +1, trapfinding
Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Mobility, Stealthy
Skills Bluff +11, Diplomacy +11, Disguise +3 (+5 acting), Escape Artist +6, Gather Information +9, Hide +10, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Knowledge (local) +11, Knowledge (nature) +6, Listen +6, Move Silently +8, Perform (string instruments) +11, Sense Motive +12, Sleight of Hand +10, Spellcraft +4, Spot +6, Survival +4 (+6 aboveground natural environments), Use Magic Device +5
Possessions combat gear plus *+1 leather armor,* short sword, *+1 light crossbow with* 30 crossbow bolts, *ring of protection +1,* masterwork violin

SEVEN RAVENS CLAN

"A child can snap a single twig, but not even a giant can snap a bundle."

—Seven Ravens Clan teaching

An import from distant and exotic lands, the Seven Ravens Clan uses the techniques and tactics of the lawless and corrupt to combat the same. The clan's members fight an ongoing and seemingly hopeless war against thieves' guilds, assassins' guilds, crime families, and other powerful underworld organizations.

Joining the Seven Ravens Clan

Those who join the Seven Ravens Clan do so because they have a score to settle or they seek vigilante justice. Because of the organization's secretive ways, those classes with an appreciation for stealth and subtlety make up the largest percentage of its members. Ninjas, rangers, rogues, and scouts form almost two-thirds of the clan, with the remaining third spread out over other classes (mainly clerics of trickster deities, fighters, monks, and sorcerers). Barbarians and paladins almost never join the clan, since they typically lack any pretense at subtlety.

Entry Requirements

Alignment: Any non-evil.
Skills: Hide 2 ranks, Knowledge (local) 2 ranks.
Special: Must have been directly victimized by a criminal organization (such as being assaulted or robbed) or be the relative, lover, or close friend of someone killed by a criminal organization. Must be able to prove such a crime and be willing to undergo a battery of magical tests, beginning with a *zone of truth* spell.

Originally a criminal organization in its own right, the Seven Ravens Clan now violently opposes such groups, acting as a sort of anti-thieves' guild. Its ninjas and rogues infiltrate underworld organizations to glean inside information, and its rangers and scouts perform external reconnaissance. Once the intelligence-gathering groups (usually pairs or trios) return, the clan draws up plans for assault and then sends in small squads of fast-moving, hard-hitting specialists. Often led by one of the stealthier clan members who gathered intelligence, an assault squad usually also contains two fighters or monks, a divine spellcaster, an arcane spellcaster, and sometimes another stealthy member (usually of a different class from that of the expedition's leader).

Seven Ravens Clan Benefits

Fellowship and revenge appeal strongly to clan members. Having been victimized before, those who join the Seven Ravens Clan wish to not only guard themselves from such pain in the future but also to return similar pain upon those who originally hurt them. Every member of the clan has suffered at the hands of criminals, and so every member is expected to help out her fellows. This help might come in the form of active physical guardianship or a discount on food or other essentials.

Services: The clan's leadership fondly repeats the clan's first principle (see the sidebar for a complete list of the clan's teachings). A member who needs to run an errand

THE TEN TEACHINGS OF THE SEVEN RAVENS

Members of the Seven Ravens Clan learn these ten teachings by heart. These define the organization and what is expected of its members. Some of the teachings are credited to the clan's current leader, Katsuo Golddragon, but others come from a longer pedigree, reaching back to the ancestral home of Katsuo's forefathers. Many of them emphasize working together and not giving enemies an opportunity to attack.

1. A child can snap a single twig, but not even a giant can snap a bundle.
2. If you lose a knife, turn your back on a foe and he will surely give you a new one.
3. Sing your thanks; swallow your complaints.
4. A dragon hoards and dies alone but wealthy. A generous man dies poor but surrounded by friends. Who then is richer?
5. When a single pebble comes loose it can bring down an entire mountain.
6. Look for friends among those you meet and you shall find them. The same holds true for enemies.
7. Trust your friends to support you when you can't support yourself. Trust your enemies to hurt you when you hurt already.
8. Walk alone, die alone. Walk with friends, live with friends.
9. Honor those who served before you, for their spirits might yet linger nearby.
10. It is better to live for the clan than to die for the clan.

or otherwise venture away from a safe house can always request a companion or escort, no matter the time. In a dangerous area, such as a city in which the clan is in open war against a criminal organization, clan members must travel in groups no smaller than four. The clan maintains a friendly relationship with the nonmilitary guards of towns and cities, and it often can call upon such law enforcers when a member is in dire need.

Knowledge: While the clan occasionally puts together large or intricately planned assaults on criminal strongholds, it also encourages its members to take the initiative in fighting the lawless and corrupt. It freely provides information on thieves' guilds, crime families, and even dark cults to its members, as well as necessary training. Members of the Seven Ravens Clan can find high-level members of nearly every class to assist them with honing their abilities.

Discounts: The Seven Ravens Clan does not keep silent about the missions it performs. Whenever the city guards discover known members of thieves' or assassins' guilds, often subdued and bound, the clan is quick to make sure everyone knows who was responsible. As a result, grateful and loyal merchants happily discount their wares for clan members who provide proof of their affiliation. This discount usually amounts to 10%, but senior members of the clan can sometimes receive as much as 50% off the normal price.

Playing a Seven Ravens Clan Member

Two very different philosophies govern the actions of a Seven Ravens Clan member. The first, reactive guardianship, constitutes both a boon and burden. Members must always help protect a fellow clan member in peril, but fellow members must also always assist them. If an assassin attacks one of the clan, his employer attacks all of the clan. The second philosophy, proactive opposition, pits members forever against the evil and the lawless. Whether working in a small group of fellow clan members, alone, or with a group of nonclan allies, they constantly seek out new information about underworld organizations.

Teamwork, mutual protection, and the safety of numbers become a part of your mindset after joining the Seven Ravens Clan. Adventuring groups turn to the clan for trustworthy individuals with the talent and skills for stealth and subterfuge. Your skills are always in high demand, and your affiliation with the clan increases your desirability. City guard organizations also recruit from the clan, for the same reasons.

You seek revenge. The clan wants to help you get it. You look for small ways to exact your vengeance, and you look forward to the time when the clan raids the establishments of those who wronged you.

Combat: The Seven Ravens Clan is all about combat. Members support one another in a fight, in whatever way suits the situation. If a significant number of allies face melee combat, others move in close to aid them: The faster foes drop, the less damage they can deal collectively. Clan members with the ability to make precision-based attacks move into the best position, with others helping them set up flanks. Otherwise, members render aid to helpless or unconscious allies. Known members of thieves' or assassins' guilds are always the first targets. The Seven Ravens Clan never lets bandits, brigands, and the like escape alive if at all possible.

Advancement: All members of the Seven Ravens Clan understand loss. Thieves might have stolen everything a member once owned, or a murderer slaughtered a member's family. Loss comes in many forms, and the clan welcomes all victims as members. A member of the clan might have approached you after a tragedy to offer you sympathy and a chance for revenge.

Because it attacks criminal organizations with their own tactics, the Seven Ravens Clan provides training in what law-enforcing organizations consider illicit (or at least shady) skills: lockpicking, stealthy movement, aiming for vital locations, and so on. People with no talent for stealth and subtlety still find a place in the clan, but they are asked to join missions far less often.

Missions: Missions for the clan consist of either reconnaissance or assault. Whether through careful and repetitive observation or by the use of divination magic, a reconnaissance mission's main objective is to observe how an organization works, often by tailing a known or suspected member, and to identify any changes in behavior (possibly indicating that the organization knows it is being watched). Once the exploratory teams have gathered the needed intelligence, assault squads move in.

Your abilities dictate what types of missions you are typically assigned, although to keep enemies guessing you might sometimes play a supporting role in a mission for which you have no talent or little ability. For the most part, though, the clan's leadership ensures that its members play to their strengths.

Responsibilities: A clan member's responsibilities are simple: Come when called. You might one day get your chance to take on a specific organization or individual, but until then you owe the clan your service in bringing down other groups.

The Seven Ravens Clan in the World

"They came at us just after dusk. We didn't even know they were there until they attacked. In one night they wiped us out—us, our informants, our fences, everyone in the city connected to us."

—"Lefty" Thrushbushel,
Red Knives Thieves' Gang survivor

Joining the Seven Ravens Clan provides a way for good-aligned PCs to enter the criminal underworld without violating their alignments or personal moral codes. The clan even counts a few paladins (often gray guards; see page

40) among its members. If your campaign offers multiple non-evil underworld organizations, the Seven Ravens Clan provides a touch of the exotic in its mysterious origins.

Structure: Nearly ten years ago a caravan with a hundred merchants, family members, and guards appeared on the horizon. The group settled at the outskirts of the area's largest city and quickly made its presence known within the market. In less than three months the settlers had sold nearly everything they brought with them, including their elaborately carved wagons. They quickly became a welcome part of the local economy.

Few citizens suspected and fewer knew of the band's dark intentions. Having gained the trust of the city's inhabitants, the original Seven Ravens Clan secretly communicated with the underground elements in and around the urban area and established a seemingly healthy rapport. That ended one night when two of the city's rival criminal guilds swept into the clan's headquarters, abetted by one of its own council, slaughtering its leaders and most of its members.

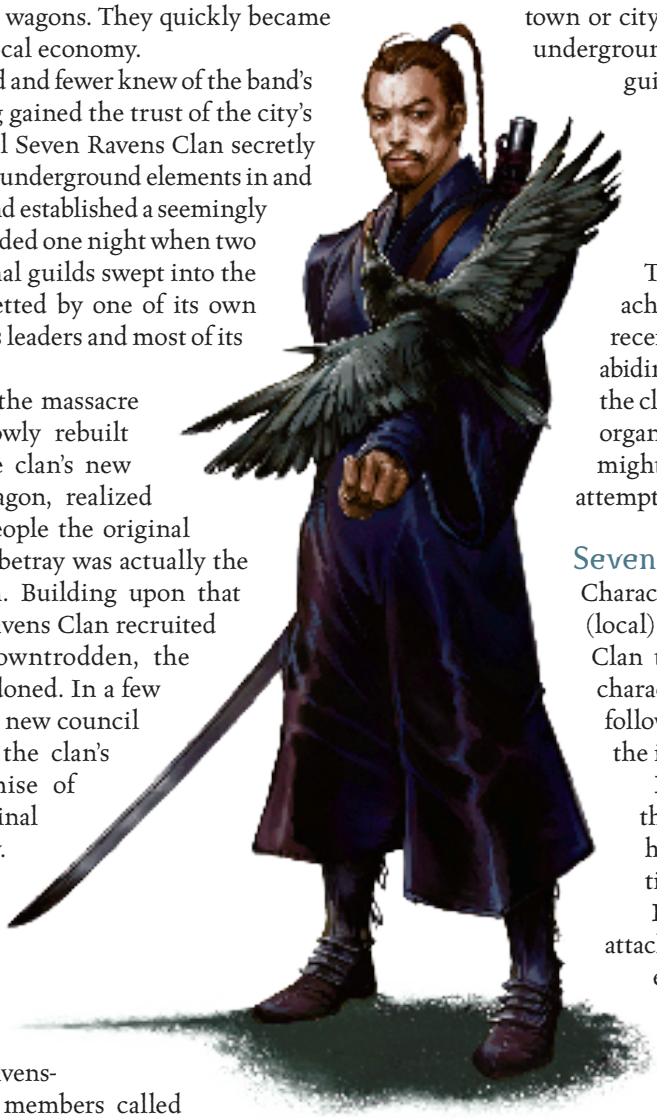
Those who survived the massacre swore revenge and slowly rebuilt their organization. The clan's new leader, Katsuo Golddragon, realized that the trust of the people the original leaders had planned to betray was actually the clan's greatest strength. Building upon that trust, the new Seven Ravens Clan recruited heavily among the downtrodden, the hopeless, and the abandoned. In a few months, Katsuo and his new council had restored much of the clan's strength on the promise of revenge against the criminal elements within the city. As part of his plan, Katsuo turned to the city's legitimate rulers and made them honorary members.

Katsuo now heads a council known as the Ravenswatch, comprising six members called Ravens. Before the clan's near destruction seven Ravens (including the leader) sat on the Ravenswatch, but when Katsuo learned that a Raven had betrayed the clan, he decided to reduce the council to its current size. Every Ravenswatch meeting still has seven chairs, with the empty seat reserved for the one Katsuo calls the Lost Raven—a representative and reminder of the treacherous act that nearly destroyed the clan. Reinforcing the clan's close ties with the city's rulers and guards, a member of the city council and one of its captains of the guard secretly serve as Ravens. Katsuo's childhood friend and current lover is another Raven, with the remaining two being other survivors of the surprise attack: a dwarf bard and a half-elf ninja.

Below the Ravens all other members live and serve equally, with slight preferential treatment provided to those who prove themselves. Such recognition usually results in the clan member being asked to lead raids and occasionally deciding where such raids take place.

The Seven Ravens Clan has branches in every town or city that also has an active criminal underground. The more powerful a thieves' guild, the larger the clan's presence in that area.

NPC Reactions: Among the victims of crime and those who uphold the law, the Seven Ravens Clan is seen as a welcome savior. The clan is not quiet about its achievements, and known members receive friendly receptions from law-abiding members of society. Conversely, the clan is hated and feared by criminal organizations, and known members might be the targets of assassination attempts.



Katsuo Golddragon, leader of the Seven Ravens Clan

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Seven Ravens Clan Lore

Characters with ranks in Knowledge (local) can research the Seven Ravens Clan to learn more about it. When a character succeeds on a skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 10: The clan behaves like a thieves' guild, but no one has ever heard of members actually committing a crime.

DC 15: The clan is known to attack all the other criminal guilds, even in broad daylight. Sometimes members are seen talking to city guards on the streets.

DC 20: The clan used to be a thieves' guild, until it was betrayed and nearly destroyed. Now members work with the city guard to bring down criminal organizations.

DC 30: Characters who achieve this level of success know important details about the Seven Ravens Clan, including its history, requirements for membership, notable members (including the names of the four Ravens who don't work for the city), the areas where it operates, and the kinds of activities it undertakes.

If a PC has suffered a horrific loss at the hands of a thieves' or assassins' guild, a representative of the Seven

Ravens clan might approach him. PCs can also contact the clan by circulating rumors through the underworld that they have a dispute with a criminal organization in town.

Headquarters: Katsuo and the other five active Ravens periodically spend weeks, months, or years organizing branches of the Seven Ravens Clan in other cities, but the clan's main base of operations is called the Rookery. Located roughly halfway between the guards' barracks and the city's worst slums, the Rookery is both physically and metaphorically a way station between the most and least lawful parts of town. The clan's headquarters encompasses most of an entire city block, comprising walled-off backrooms and narrow corridors, hidden behind a dozen shops. An old but respectable-looking antiques and curios shop (called Taan's Timeless Trinkets) is the Rookery's main entrance. To throw off the clan's enemies, Katsuo insists on allowing thieves to rob the shop on occasion. He even occasionally pays protection money for Taan's whenever a new criminal organization pops up.

Seven Ravens Clan Members in the Game

Members of the Seven Ravens Clan vary widely in appearance and personality, but nearly all of them have the same unifying goal: vengeance. Some are content to watch the activities of thieves and other underworld figures and report their observations to the clan leadership. Others take it upon themselves to kill known or suspected members of criminal organizations and individual lawbreakers. Such driven members sometimes take their need for revenge too far, prompting the clan to turn them over to the proper authorities.

Seven Ravens Clan members make good patrons and allies. They work well as information brokers who can provide the PCs knowledge of the city's underworld in exchange for a favor. As a twist, you can use a city guard officer to send the PCs on various missions to stop different criminal organizations, revealing only later (or not at all) that the PCs' contact is actually a Raven.

Adaptation: Obviously, the Seven Ravens Clan is best suited to city-based campaigns, especially those that focus on intrigue and the workings of the criminal underworld. The clan can also work as a rebel organization working surreptitiously to overthrow a usurper or despot. If you prefer, you can easily alter the clan's overall outlook to make it into a traditional thieves' guild, either as one the PCs support or as one they oppose.

Sample Encounter: Several avenues exist for involving the PCs with the Seven Ravens Clan. If a character's background includes entanglements with a criminal organization, she might begin play as a member of the clan. Alternatively, the clan might send a representative to meet her shortly after the start of the campaign. On the other hand, a PC who belongs to a thieves' guild might become the target of a Seven Ravens Clan raid—particularly if she makes a name for herself in the city. Or the party might stumble onto the clan by breaking up yet another robbery of Taan's Timeless Trinkets, thereby discovering the main entrance to the Rookery.

EL 11: Despite his importance to the clan, Katsuo insists on personally leading raids into enemy strongholds. When not on a mission, he enjoys leisurely strolls through the city's better neighborhoods and carriage rides to the guard barracks. He remains ever restless and hates remaining cooped up within the Rookery's confining walls. Because of concern expressed by those around him, Katsuo cannot leave the Rookery without his ever watchful bodyguard, Aska Cannet (female human rogue 4/warrior 6).

If the PCs are members of the clan, they might encounter Katsuo alone within the Rookery. Otherwise they might run into him (and Aska) on a walk or while traveling to the guard barracks (if other guards are with him, the EL of the encounter might increase).

Katsuo Golddragon — CR 11

Male human rogue 7/scout* 4
*Scout class from *Complete Adventurer*
NG Medium humanoid
Init +4; **Senses** Listen +11, Spot +13
Languages Common, Elven, Sylvan

AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 19; uncanny dodge (+3 Dex, +4 armor, +2 natural)
hp 45 (11 HD)
Fort +4, **Ref** +12, **Will** +4
Resist evasion

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)
Melee mwk knife crossbow bayonet +6/+1 (1d6–1)
Ranged *+2 light crossbow* +13 (1d8+2/19–20)
Base Atk +8; **Grp** +7
Atk Options Combat Reflexes, Concussion Attack, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, skill tricks, skirmish (+3d6, +3 AC), sneak attack +4d6
Combat Gear 2 *potions of cure moderate wounds*

Abilities Str 8, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 13
SQ battle fortitude, trackless step, trap sense +2, trapfinding
Feats Combat Reflexes, Concussion Attack*, Improved Skirmish*, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot[B], Swift Ambusher*
*New feat described in Chapter 3
Skills Balance +5, Bluff +9, Climb +12, Diplomacy +18, Disguise +1 (+3 acting), Escape Artist +16, Gather Information +13, Hide +11, Intimidate +3, Jump +14, Knowledge (local) +11, Listen +11, Sense Motive +9, Spot +13, Swim +4, Tumble +18, Use Rope +3 (+5 involving bindings)
Skill Tricks* Acrobatic Backstab, Leaping Climber, Quick Escape, Quick Swimmer
*Described in Chapter 3
Possessions combat gear plus *+2 leather armor, +2 light crossbow* with masterwork knife crossbow bayonet* and 60 bolts, 10 silvered bolts, and 10 cold iron bolts, *amulet of natural armor +2*
*New item described in Chapter 5

Battle Fortitude (Ex) Bonus on initiative checks and Fortitude saves while wearing light or no armor and carrying a light load. Included above. *Complete Adventurer* 12.

LEGENDARY SITES

Legendary sites, similar to magical locations (a concept introduced in *Dungeon Master's Guide II*), are areas with special properties or effects from which a character might gain a significant benefit.

Magical locations are areas that have been crafted by mighty magic or imbued with ancient power. They are hard to find and harder to use, and confer their powers but rarely. Legendary sites, in contrast, are places where great works have been wrought and where seemingly impossible deeds have occurred. These locations have a lesser kind of power. A site such as a sandy beach where an explorer stepped for the first time, or a plaza where a long-fallen marvel once towered, pulses with its own renown, if not with true magic. The stories that inspire these places and make them famous lend them reputations that can be shared by those who brush with such a site's notoriety. Characters who visit these sites of historical import, incredible acts, mystery, and great danger come away changed, not just in the eyes of the public but in their own hearts as well.

Such legendary sites need not be unique. Their inspirational effects might develop wherever a spot becomes imbued with a momentous event or spectacular achievement.

LEGENDARY SITE DESCRIPTIONS

The legendary sites described below are presented in the following format.

Name of Legendary Site

The entry begins with a description of the location.

Lore: This portion of the description provides any information available to characters about the location, along with the relevant Knowledge check DCs necessary to acquire it. Bardic knowledge checks can be substituted for any of these checks at the same DCs.

Description: This entry offers a physical description of a typical example of such a location and includes more details about the place (including sounds, smells, and tactile sensations) and details of how its effect or special ability looks once activated.

Prerequisite: Any prerequisite needed to gain the legendary site's special ability is detailed here. In addition to meeting this prerequisite, a character must visit the location physically to have any chance of acquiring the special ability it confers.

Location Activation: These paragraphs describe the rules for acquiring and using the special ability that the location bestows. Any command words or activities needed to activate the location's power are also noted here.

Recharge: Some legendary sites confer their benefits only at intervals; this section details the time that must pass before the site's power can be used again. Legendary sites such as those described here often confer their benefits repeatedly, though certain conditions might apply as described in this entry.

Special Ability: This entry describes the special ability conferred and gives the rules for using it. Unless otherwise specified, no creature can gain the benefit of a legendary site's conferred power more than once.

Duration: This section gives the ability's duration or number of uses.

Aura: This line describes the type of magical aura, if any, that surrounds the location. (Legendary sites, including those described here, typically have no magical auras.)

Variation: Since legendary sites can arise in multiple places, this entry (if present) suggests similar situations or areas for placing the location.

Ability Value: This entry provides the gp value of the conferred ability. Although these abilities can never be bought or sold, they can be substituted for treasure of like value and count toward the benefiting character's overall wealth.

BUSSENGEIST HAUNT

Tragedy follows calamity, disaster follows catastrophe, and a lifetime of death leads to an afterlife of mourning. Or, at least, such is the way of the *bussengeist haunt*. Spawning wherever some foul action or gross inaction leads to a catastrophe of life-shattering proportions, these dim towers, fallen gatehouses, broken dams, and similarly gloomy locales are infused with an almost palpable regret, a weight that saps all levity and dampens the soul. Yet despite such a place's ill nature, those bearing a lesser burden of misfortune might cast their weight away in such a place, like tears into a lake.

Often neglected and abandoned to its own unnatural gloom, a *bussengeist haunt* might appear anywhere that has fallen under the shadow of tragedy. The specific locale described below is just one example.

Lore: Characters with ranks in Knowledge (history) or Knowledge (religion) can research a *bussengeist haunt* to learn more about it. When a character succeeds on a skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 10: Decades ago a great misfortune occurred at Nereid Dam, causing the dam to break and wipe out a nearby town.

DC 15: Nereid Dam now lies in ruins, a crumbling watchtower on one shore being the only evidence that it ever stood. This tower is rumored to be haunted.

DC 20: A cruel black dragon shattered Nereid Dam. Supposedly a guard saw the monster as it approached, but rather then alerting the defending garrison, he attempted to flee. He died with the rest.

DC 25: Some places resound with the gravity of the actions that occurred there. A *bussengeist haunt* is such a place, infused with the results of a tragic action or inaction. *Bussengeist haunts* often attract mournful ghosts and other regretful or tortured undead.

Description: On the moldy shores of the Wreckwater hunch the last, dilapidated remains of Nereid Dam. Even flights of bats and the teeming reptiles of the murky water refuse to linger among the crumbling gray stones of the tower that yet stands. Overgrown and abandoned, its wooden floors long rotted and fallen, the two-story tower is a husk thick with dust and ages-old debris. Yet when the wind blows across the river and through the sagging ruin, the tower creaks and groans with its own regretful song. And sometimes, some say, a voice moans over these sounds of decrepitude—a hollow, tortured sigh ever calling, "Why?"

While within the boundaries of a *bussengeist haunt*, no character can use a luck reroll from a luck feat (page 72) or an action point (from the *Eberron Campaign Setting*).

Prerequisite: A character must be suffering from the effect of a curse or ill luck to make use of a *bussengeist haunt*.

Location Activation: A character must spend at least 10 minutes describing her problems, curses, or afflictions while within the boundaries of a *bussengeist haunt*. At the end of this declaration, she gains the benefit of the location. The character must be able to confess her own problems aloud; thus, a silenced, petrified, or otherwise muted character cannot receive its ability.

This spiritual unburdening attracts the attention of 1d4 spirits chained to the area (plus one additional spirit for each creature after the first seeking the location's benefit). These spirits manifest in a variety of forms, most commonly as allips, ghosts, or spectres, depending on the level of the characters who enter. The apparitions are the remnants of those whose acts doomed so many and created the *bussengeist haunt*. They are not malicious but seek forgiveness for their actions from any who will listen. Their terrible forms can make conversation difficult, with confrontation all too common. Characters who do manage to communicate with these spirits and hearken to their tales can convince the undead to leave them in peace.

Recharge: Any character who enters and activates a *bussengeist haunt* can acquire its special ability, and multiple characters can do so at the same time. A character can return to remove a later curse. Each time requires dealing with the resident spirits, however.

Special Ability (Su): A character who confesses her worries and problems to a *bussengeist haunt* casts them away, her magical afflictions subsumed into the existing ill will of the location. Treat this effect as if *break enchantment* had been cast on the character.

All who benefit from a *bussengeist haunt*, though, become infused with a portion of the negative emotion and foul stigma associated with this location. This dark energy applies a –1 penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks and prevents the character from using any luck rerolls or action points for the next 7 days.

Duration: The *break enchantment* effect is instantaneous, while the dark energy lingers for 7 days.

Variation: A *bussengeist haunt* might appear in any of a number of forms. Any place that holds the psychic residue of a great tragedy might be a focal point for ill emotions, such as the boarded-over office of a neglectful regent, a wizard's workplace housing a still-open portal to the Elemental Plane of Fire, or a charred druidic circle.

Ability Value: 1,000 gp.

CHAMPION'S CROWN

Blood-soaked and forever reverberating with the screams of countless wild crowds, the *champion's crown* is the goal of every gladiator and sporting competitor, the summit of athletic accomplishment. A steep ziggurat festooned with laurels and the weapons of past heroes, the *champion's crown* dominates one end of the imperial coliseum, a distant but everpresent goal. The adulation of a crazed crowd and the invigorating soul of triumph lend this site its power.

Lore: Characters with ranks in Knowledge (local) can research the *champion's crown* to learn more about it. When a character succeeds on a skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 10: The *champion's crown* is the podium of victors at the coliseum.

DC 15: The *champion's crown* has numerous tiers used in varying sporting events, but the pinnacle is reserved for those who have accomplished the greatest feats and who have gained the adoration of the crowd.

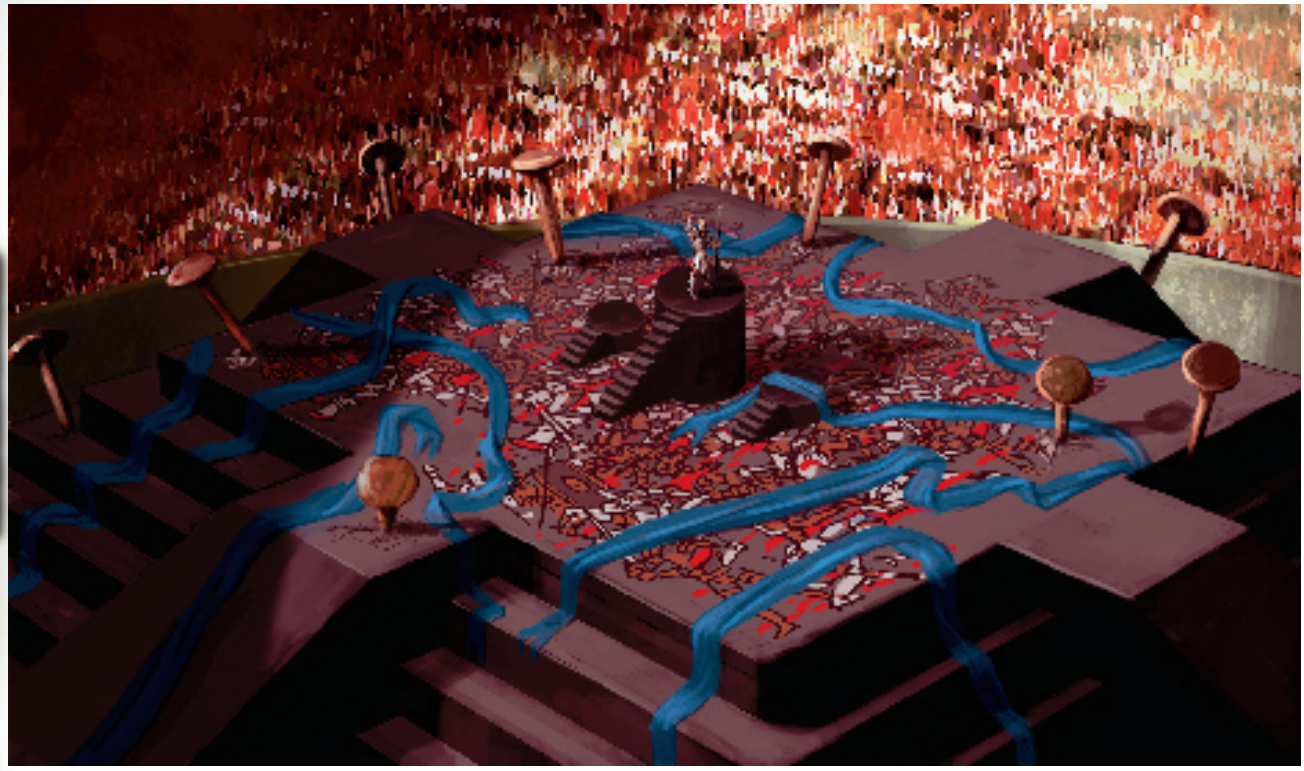
DC 20: The weapons of past victors adorn the *champion's crown*. It is said that these weapons and the spirits of past champions guard the ziggurat against the unworthy and cheaters who attempt to ascend.

DC 25: The *champion's crown* is far older than the coliseum. It was once used as an altar by some nameless cult for ceremonial battles and ritual bloodlettings.

Description: Towering over 60 feet tall, the *champion's crown* is a black stone ziggurat pierced with numerous gigantic nails of rusted iron. Covering its surface are images of gory battle, and in places, grisly sacrifice. Much of this dark imagery is covered over with laurel garlands, lengths of blue cloth, and the weapons of past champions, some ages old. At 10-foot intervals, one on each side of the structure, are platforms made to honor lesser champions and lower-ranking athletes. These rostrums each correspond to specific rankings, well known by visitors.

Prerequisite: Only a creature that has fairly achieved some great victory in the coliseum, sparked the adulation of a full crowd, and climbs to its highest platform can gain the benefit of the *champion's crown*. An official, priest, or master of ceremonies presiding over the coliseum determines who is worthy of such prestige.

Rarely is someone allowed to scale the *champion's crown* after only one appearance. This place of honor is reserved for one who has participated in a championship and bested all comers or performed a feat of prowess never before witnessed on the coliseum floor.



Illus. by E. Deschamps

The champion's crown

Location Activation: A character who arrives at the pinnacle of the *champion's crown* and spends 1 minute soaking in the adoration of the crowd gains the benefit of this location. It is possible, though rare, for several characters to be so honored at the same time.

Ascending to the victor's platform of the *champion's crown* requires a successful DC 12 Climb check. The top of the ziggurat has room for four Medium creatures.

Recharge: Any champion who has performed admirably in the coliseum might gain the benefits of the *champion's crown*. The true love of the people is rare, however, and usually no more than three individuals in a city enjoy the special ability conferred by the location. Successful gladiatorial groups or sporting teams sometimes exceed this limit.

An individual can regain the benefits of this location after 1 year if he once again accomplishes a crowd-pleasing and noteworthy feat in the coliseum.

Special Ability (Ex): A character who has rightfully ascended the *champion's crown* becomes a hero of the community that holds the coliseum. He gains a +2 bonus on Diplomacy, Gather Information, and Intimidate checks made to influence or gain information from any individual who resides in that city.

In addition, all residents of the community have a default initial attitude of friendly toward the character if they recognize him.

Duration: The favor of the public is fickle, and thus the benefits of this location fade after 1 year.

Ability Value: 1,000 gp.

COURT OF THIEVES

Below labyrinthine sewers, deep basement vaults, and the lairs of hidden creatures that feast on society's filth lies the lost throne of the underworld, the famed yet forgotten *court of thieves*. Generations of bandit lords, robber kings, master assassins, and at times fouler tyrants held court in this sprawling den of excesses hidden beneath the very noses of those who would root it out. Those days are long past.

Lore: Characters with ranks in Knowledge (history) or Knowledge (local) can research the *court of thieves* to learn more about it. When a character succeeds on a skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 10: The *court of thieves* was a hidden place where anything could be bought and any pleasure could be had.

DC 15: All thieves' guilds and criminal activities were once ruled over by the elusive *court of thieves*.

DC 20: Treasures from a hundred lands were piled at the feet of the king of thieves as payment for the privilege of conducting crimes within his city.

DC 25: The vices of greedy brigands and honorless rogues eventually splintered the king's power and left the *court of thieves* abandoned.

Description: The *court of thieves* is a subterranean palace, a complex of chambers built in secret far beneath city streets. One hall might be as vast and grand as the royal opera house—and indeed might have been used for a similar purpose—while the next could be nothing more than a crumbling chamber of exposed rock and sewer pipes. The

most splendid and remarkable room in the *court of thieves* is the hall housing the Throne of Thieves. This giant-sized throne of the king of thieves is ornately and fantastically sculpted, and within its nooks and crevices generations of rogues kept their precious trinkets, lucky charms, and symbols of Olidammara. Although the court was largely stripped by the criminals who abandoned it, these trifles were left behind out of respect for the dethroned king of thieves.

The entrance to the *court of thieves* has long been lost. Hidden deep within an ancient sewer, crumbled warehouse, tavern basement, or in the shadow of some bastion of law, the door is masterfully disguised. Those who do manage to find it must then best a gantlet of tricks and traps designed to keep out uninvited guests, not to mention overcoming whatever creatures might now call the *court of thieves* home.

Prerequisite: A character must navigate the *court of thieves* all the way to the Throne of Thieves to gain the location's benefit.

Location Activation: A character merely has to take a trinket from the Throne of Thieves to gain this location's special ability. Although ancient, these baubles are not valuable, being lucky copper coins minted by long fallen empires, archaic or no-longer-used holy symbols, rusted lockpicks scored with an owner's initials, and similar such items.

Recharge: As long as the location of the *court of thieves* remains a secret, anyone can gain its benefits. Should its location become widespread knowledge, though, the exceptional nature of having visited the place fades, and it no longer confers any benefit.

Special Ability (Ex): Any character who successfully navigates the dangers of the *court of thieves* is blessed with the great luck of Olidammara. He gains a bonus luck feat (page 72) of his choice, though he must still meet the normal prerequisite for that feat.

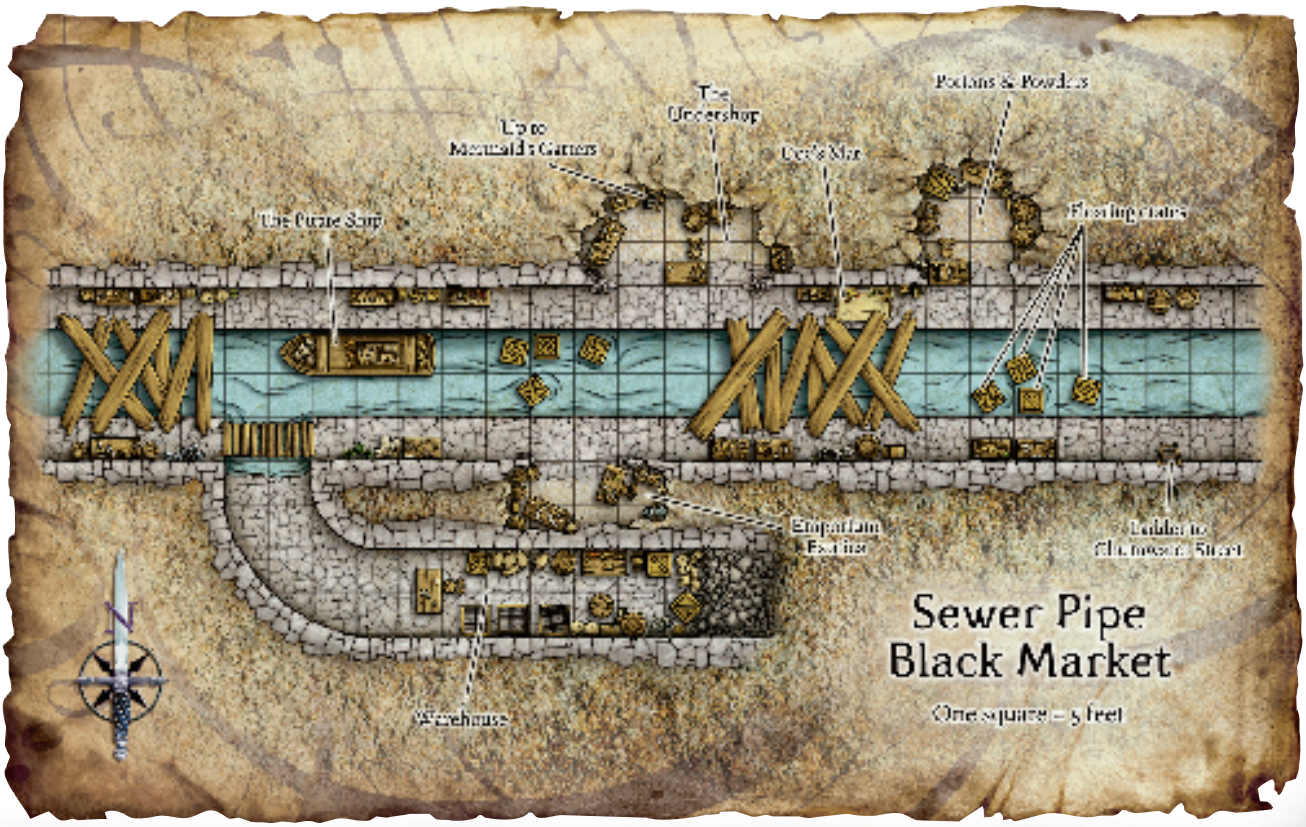
Furthermore, any character who bears an item taken from the Throne of Thieves is considered to have touched rogue royalty. The character doubles his Charisma bonus (if any) for the purpose of determining his Leadership score when trying to attract a cohort or followers with levels of bard or rogue. In addition, the character can also have double the normal number of contacts within the criminal underworld (*DMG2* 153).

Duration: The luck feat gained by the character is a permanent benefit. The other benefits last as long as the character possesses the trinket taken from the Throne of Thieves.

Ability Value: 6,000 gp.

THE FROG GOD'S FANE

Half sunken and overgrown by ages of decay, the ancient temple of a strange, little-known deity molders deep in the jungle marshes. Its location has been long forgotten, and now the only attendants of the *frog god's fane* croak lazily amid moldy relics and fallen statues forming islands of gold.



Lore: Characters with ranks in Knowledge (history), Knowledge (nature), or Knowledge (religion) can research the *frog god's fane* to learn more about it. When a character succeeds on a skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 15: Countless civilizations have risen and fallen deep within the jungle. Their ruins still lie hidden from civilized eyes.

DC 20: A cult that worshiped Wastri, a deity shaped like a frog, once held great influence from a stone temple in an untamed swamp. Frogs of incredible size are sometimes spotted near mysterious ruins deep within the flooded jungle.

DC 25: Wastri directs his followers to further the needs of humans and amphibians. His worshipers once erected rich temples to honor their deity in the murky places his swamp-born wards might attend.

Description: Crumbling and overrun by denizens of the swamp—especially bloated and oversized amphibians—the *frog god's fane* is now more a monument to rot than to any deity. Whole floors have been flooded, and the riches that once lined the walls and served as sacrifices have been lost to ages of muck and eroding waters. Yet within its deepest sanctuaries, through passages filled by brackish waters, lie hidden chambers in air pockets. Within these depths remain treasures untouched by swamp water, but even more valuable are the strange secrets carved in stone: sculptures once viewed only by the highest of priests, which detail worship by both human and amphibian.

Prerequisite: A character must discover the ruined *frog god's fane* and reach the secret chambers within its depths to gain the benefit of this location.

Location Activation: A character must spend at least 10 minutes in meditation on the scriptural secrets hidden deep within the *frog god's fane*, and make a DC 15 Intelligence check at the end of that time. If she succeeds on this check, she gains the benefit of this location. Otherwise, she has failed to accept some vital truth among the markings.

Recharge: Any number of characters who plumb the treacherous depths of the *frog god's fane* can gain the benefit of this location. A character who fails the required Intelligence check cannot try again until her Intelligence score permanently increases.

Special Ability (Ex): Upon succeeding on the Intelligence check to understand the frog god's secrets, the character makes a fundamental connection, gaining an insight into truths she never realized were linked. She gains Skill Focus in her choice of Knowledge (history), (nature), or (religion) as a bonus feat. Furthermore, even if the character has no ranks in the chosen Knowledge skill, she can make checks with that skill as if she were trained.

Duration: A character who gains the insight of the *frog god's fane* learns its secrets and gains its benefits permanently.

Variation: Any seat of great and unfathomable information might grant an effect like that of the *frog god's fane*. For example, a metal tower crashed from the stars might grant those who come to understand it bonuses on Knowledge (architecture and engineering) and Knowledge (the planes) checks, while the ancestral library of the imperial family might provide insights into Knowledge (geography) and Knowledge (nobility and royalty). Such information is too esoteric to share, requiring one to experience it personally to gain its benefits, but a character might learn some important piece of information that could lead to further adventures.

Ability Value: 2,000 gp.

HEWARD'S HALL

An obscure patron of bards and other music makers, the mortal Heward studied the ancient songs of the elves, and legends say, eventually brought music to humanity. He created instruments that are commonplace today and composed some of the oldest songs and airs known to the race, as well as crafting a unique pipe organ known for its mystical properties. His furthering of music led bards to honor Heward's name, eventually giving rise to a number of cathedrals, concert halls, and playhouses dedicated to the first bard, each taking the name "Heward's hall." Some of these sites are incredibly inspirational to songsmiths and musicians of all walks, instilling within them the ability to push their own talents to extreme heights. The specific locale described below is just one example of such a legendary performance venue.

Lore: Characters with ranks in Knowledge (religion) can research a *Heward's hall* to learn more about it. When a character succeeds on a skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 15: Heward is the patron of bards and human musicians. This result reveals the commonly known stories bout him.

DC 20: Numerous concert halls and theaters are known as Heward's halls, in honor of the first bard. Some such places are very inspirational to artists.

DC 25: Owners, managers, or religious groups controlling a legendary *Heward's hall* often restrict access to only the most accomplished or promising artists.

Description: Behind the stage of the Saltmarsh Playhouse's main auditorium is an organist's nook, a famed *Heward's hall*. The high-ceilinged room allows an accompanist to play the impressive, two-story pipe organ without its size and grandeur detracting from performances on stage. The walls of the room and many of the towering brass pipes of the organ are engraved with well-known songs that are said to have been composed by Heward or that are dedicated to the first bard. Directly over the

dual keyboards of the organ sits a stone bust of Heward himself, a foppish-looking rake with a jaunty smile and tousled hair. Despite all efforts, the Saltmarsh *Heward's hall* is constantly plagued by small rodents, and the organ itself requires frequent retuning.

Aydi Zarastian, guildmaster of the playhouse, created this *Heward's hall* as a matter of tradition, holding that all the finest theaters and performance halls should host such a shrine. As a connoisseur of the arts, she grants access only to those with formal training and true musical talent.

Prerequisite: To gain the special ability conferred by a *Heward's hall*, a character must possess at least 10 ranks in a Perform skill and must succeed on a DC 30 Perform check made as part of a public performance in the hall. The performer can't take 10 on this check. The owner of the *Heward's hall*, however, might place additional conditions or limits on access.

Though most performers prefer to use the Saltmarsh hall's great pipe organ (requiring Perform [keyboard instruments]), other types of performances are permitted.

Location Activation: At the conclusion of a successful performance in a *Heward's hall*, the location immediately confers its benefit on the performer.

Recharge: Only one character per night can gain the benefit of a *Heward's hall*.

Special Ability (Ex): A character who successfully completes a performance in a *Heward's hall* gains Skill Focus (Perform) as a bonus feat, using the same Perform subcategory as that of the performance. If the performer already has Skill Focus (Perform) in that subcategory, he can instead select any bardic music feat for which he meets the prerequisite.

The performer also gains a +2 competence bonus on Craft checks to create new artistic compositions related to Perform skills. This bonus applies to all forms of performance, from acting to instrumental play.

Variation: This version of a *Heward's hall* enhances the Perform skill, but the idea of an inspirational site yielding greater works can easily be adapted to any number of other skills. For example, the nonmagical forge in which a famous weapon or legendary artifact was created might inspire future generations to create great works in metal over its fires, granting Skill Focus (Craft) or even an item creation feat.

Duration: The bonus feat granted by a *Heward's hall* is permanent. The competence bonus on Craft checks fades after 1 year.

Ability Value: 5,000 gp.

THE HIGHEST SPIRE

Jutting past castle towers and temple minarets, the *highest spire* reaches from the mortal world to stab at the very heavens. The pinnacle of what is unquestionably the tallest building in the city, it draws travelers from the world over to stand in its incredible shadow. Every year as part of an annual festival, a handful of daredevils and adventure seekers gaze up at the famed structure's summit not out of awe, but determined to reach the top.

Lore: Characters with ranks in Knowledge (local) can research the *highest spire* to learn more about it. When a character succeeds on a skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 10: The *highest spire* is aptly named, being the tallest building in the city and possibly in the civilized world.

DC 15: Every year, during a citywide festival, a dozen or so revelers attempt to scale the *highest spire* to win the title "Spire Hawk."

DC 20: Every year several people are bruised and battered climbing the spire, and occasionally the attempt ends in a climber's death.

DC 25: No guard can patrol the spire's highest reaches. Who knows what might lurk or roost in its cloud-cloaked recesses?

Description: Hewn from a distant mountain peak's night-blue marble and studded with starlike pearls, the *highest spire* itself is a 50-foot steeple sculpted as an exulting, spear-wielding archon. The spire is mounted atop the tallest building in the city, whose summit is a full 1,333 feet from the ground. Constructed by magic, and supposedly held aloft by the same forces, this wonder of the world compels visitors to attempt to scale it year after year.

The loftiest reaches of the *highest spire* are treacherous, and not simply due to the height. The tower's many projections and the intricate wings and folds of the spire's angelic form create sizable niches. Rumors have long held that dire bats, arrowhawks, even a dragon or even a territorial and ill-tempered couatl might live at the peak of this artificial mountain. (The DM should assign one or more hostile creatures to interfere with progress to the top, based on the average level of the ascending characters.)

Prerequisite: A character must climb from the building's base to the peak of the *highest spire* on a specific holiday to gain the location's benefit.

Location Activation: The building the *highest spire* perches atop requires successful DC 25 Climb checks to scale, while climbing the convoluted spire itself requires only DC 15 checks. The first character to complete the ascent immediately benefits from the location's conferred power.

Climbers are not permitted to use any spell, wondrous item, or other magical effect to assist in the climb (including Strength-boosting effects) or to reach the pinnacle by other means. Scarring the building, such as by hammering pitons into its surfaces, is also forbidden, although nondamaging climbing implements and mechanical inventions are acceptable.

Festival mages check all participants and closely monitor their ascents. These mages commonly prepare protective spells such as *feather fall* to aid imperiled climbers, but

Illus. by H. Lyon

The highest spire

athletes are encouraged to make their own precautionary arrangements. The ban against magic is the only rule once climbing begins. Interfering with other climbers is frowned upon, but not prohibited.

Recharge: After a character has become the year's Spire Hawk, no one can benefit from the *highest spire*'s special ability for 1 year. The next year, a new climber earns the title (this could be the previous year's champion).

No character can gain more than one bonus feat from the *highest spire*, though a second victory still bestows the other benefits noted below.

Special Ability (Ex): The experience of scaling the *highest spire* grants a character insight into her own athletic talents that she never realized before. She gains her choice of Skill Focus (Climb) or Agile Athlete (see the sidebar) as a bonus feat.

Additionally, that character earns the title "Spire Hawk" and receives a finely crafted wooden medallion carved with the image of the archon at the tower's peak. For the next year, that character holds the champion's title and wears this medallion, gaining a +2 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy checks when dealing with natives of the city that is home to the *highest spire*. In addition, the character receives a 10% discount on all goods and services purchased in that city (up to a maximum discount of 1,000 gp on items or services costing 10,000 gp or more).

Duration: The bonus feat conferred by this location is permanent. The other benefits remain until the next city festival, a year later. At that time, the character must be the first to climb the *highest spire* again, or lose these benefits to the new champion.

Variation: The *highest spire* might be any location that involves an annual feat of skill and endurance. Changing this location to suit your campaign is as simple as making the event a lengthy marathon, night-long ball, song competition, scavenger hunt, or any other trial that tests the competitors' ability and stamina. The frequency of the event might also change, shortening to several times a year or becoming a rare festival that occurs only once a decade. The difficulty might also change, even requiring Constitution checks (perhaps of increasing

AGILE ATHLETE

You rely on your agility to perform athletics feats, rather than brute strength.

Prerequisite: Climb 1 rank, Jump 1 rank.

Benefit: When making a Climb or Jump check, you use your Dexterity modifier for the check.

Normal: Without this feat, you use your Strength modifier for Climb and Jump checks.

This feat first appeared in *Races of the Wild*.

difficulty) and imposing ever greater restrictions to continue competing.

Ability Value: 3,000 gp.

IRON WYRM VAULT

The lifeblood of a nation—tax gold, imperial heirlooms, the spoils of forgotten wars—all flows here to the ultimate in security, the *iron wyrm vault*. This treasure trove of a centuries-old dynasty is every thief's dream, and countless such dreamers have lost their lives reaching for their fantasy.

Lore: Characters with ranks in Knowledge (nobility and royalty) can research the *iron wyrm vault* to learn more about it. When a character succeeds on a skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 10: The rulers of the nation keep their most precious treasures in an ancient trove called the *iron wyrm vault*.

DC 15: Countless traps, magical wards, and undying guardians protect the *iron wyrm vault*, their numbers expanding with the innovations of each new generation.

DC 20: Members of the royal family know how to circumvent the defenses of the *iron wyrm vault*.

DC 25: The *iron wyrm vault* is named for its most obvious decoration, which is also rumored to be its strongest guardian.

Description: While the entire compound that houses the *iron wyrm vault* is known by that name, the actual vault is a hall of interconnected chambers that include lavishly appointed salons, display rooms of glittering artifacts, and repositories brimming with loose coins. Above the entire complex hangs a sculpture of exquisite quality, an amazingly lifelike dragon the size of a great wyrm shaped from pure adamantine.

Within the *iron wyrm vault*, dazzling treasures collect dust. The smells of old air and mild decay mingle with the static charge of magical protections so numerous and powerful as to be palpable. Those who enter feel as though they're being watched. Some of the relics stored here are kept hidden away out of fear, and other ancient treasures even have minds and agendas all their own.

The DM should populate the iron wyrm vault with magic traps and guardians appropriate for the levels of the characters infiltrating it. (Avoid protections that would damage the valuables, such as a *fireball* trap in a room filled with priceless paintings.) Against epic-level characters, the great sculpture might be an ironwyrm golem of immense size (*Draconomicon* 165).

Prerequisite: A character must successfully navigate the protections of the *iron wyrm vault* to claim its benefit.

Location Activation: Simply breaking into the *iron wyrm vault* without the knowledge or consent of the place's royal owners isn't quite enough to make the burglar a legend. Only claiming an item from the *iron wyrm vault* as proof of its infiltration activates the location's benefit.

At the DM's option, those captured after reaching the vault might gain the location's benefit even if they have nothing to show for their visit, as tales of their daring act—and perhaps even subsequent trial—spread through word of mouth.

Recharge: Any character who enters the *iron wyrm vault*, successfully passes its countless guardians and trials, and returns with proof of his accomplishment gains the location's benefit.

Special Ability (Ex): Breaching the *iron wyrm vault* grants the thief great insights into his own powers of stealth and thievery. The character gains one of the following as a bonus feat: Nimble Fingers, Skill Focus (Disable Device, Hide, Move Silently, Open Lock, or Search), Stealthy, or Tactile Trapsmith (see the sidebar).

Furthermore, the successful burglar gains a +2 bonus on Diplomacy and Gather Information checks made to influence or gain information from any thief, freedom fighter, or other opponent of the nation that controls the *iron wyrm vault* (as long as the character's escapade is known to them). However, he takes a –2 penalty on the same checks made in conjunction with guards, members of the noble class, and other "respectable" sorts within that nation.

These benefits are in addition to any treasure the character might have stolen from the *iron wyrm vault*.

Duration: Having infiltrated one of the most heavily guarded treasure troves in the land makes a thief a legend for life, so the effects of the *iron wyrm vault* are permanent.

Variation: The *iron wyrm vault* might be any heavily guarded trove of any kind of treasure, perhaps the storehouse of an influential religion, crime syndicate, or powerful monster. Likewise, what is stored within also might be anything of value, such as a library of arcane tomes, an arsenal of powerful weapons, or even a prison filled with dissidents. The DM should alter the groups affected by the location's benefit to better fit any modifications.

Additionally, the skill check modifiers granted by this location might vary depending on what a character takes from the vault. One who steals the crown of the nation's founder, for example, might receive a +5 bonus (and –5 penalty) instead of the normal +2/–2.

Ability Value: 3,000 gp.

TACTILE TRAPSMITH

You can rely on your rapid reflexes and nimble fingers instead of your intellect when searching a room or when disabling a trap.

Benefit: You add your Dexterity bonus (rather than your Intelligence bonus) on all Search and Disable Device checks.

In addition, you receive no penalty on these checks for darkness or blindness.

This feat first appeared in *Complete Adventurer*.

OLIDAMMARA'S SHELL

One legend associated with the bard of the gods, Olidammara, tells how the divine trickster was once cornered by an army of ogres. Rather than fight the savages, the keen-witted deity surrounded himself with a spherical carapace that resembled the shell of an armadillo. Once he was thus covered, the god teleported away from inside the shell, leaving the brutes to beat on the empty container for a year and a day.

After the ogres finally dispersed, a greedy wizard discovered the shell and sought to use the divine creation for his own purposes. Much to the mage's chagrin, however, the shell disappeared from his possession. Now *Olidammara's shell* appears and disappears at the fickle god's whim, and might show up in unlikely places.

Lore: Characters with ranks in Knowledge (religion) can research *Olidammara's shell* to learn more about it. When a character succeeds on a skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 15: A successful check reveals the story of Olidammara using his shell to escape the army of ogres.

DC 20: Olidammara's shell teleports from place to place, seemingly with the same whimsical nature as Olidammara himself. Those who find the shell and touch it gain good luck.

DC 25: Olidammara's shell does not allow itself to be tracked or exploited. Those who find it should thank their own luck and benefit from the shell while they can, for it vanishes as quickly as it appears.

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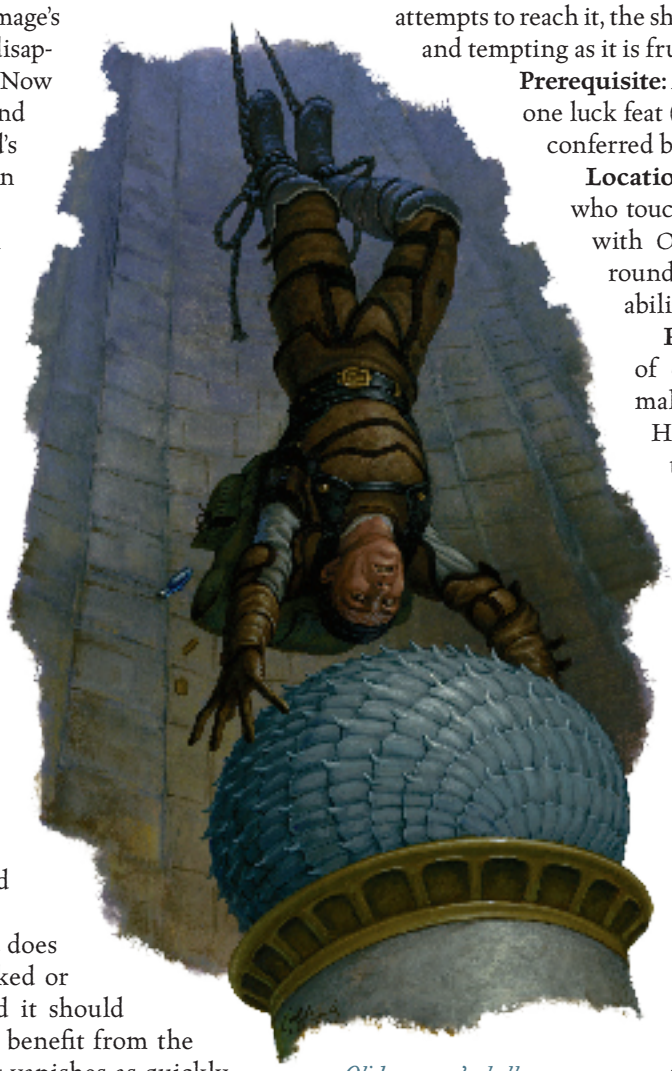

Olidammara's shell

Description: Approximately 4 feet in diameter, *Olidammara's shell* is an unbreakable sphere with a dull metallic luster. In its jumps from place to place, the shell takes on slightly smaller or larger sizes to better suit its surroundings, and even takes on different colors, at the deity's whim. Wherever it appears, the shell floats of its own accord as it spins slowly, even in places where such magical levitation would normally be impossible. Furthermore, an *antimagic field* apparently surrounds the shell, since most magic seems unable to work in its vicinity.

Currently *Olidammara's shell* hovers about 40 feet off the ground, just above a massive pedestal perched atop the gigantic gate of Castle Granite Throne, the fortress home of a clan of stone giants. Although the giants largely ignore the shell, rumors have started circulating in nearby towns of the divine object's appearance. Adventure-seekers and daredevils have sought to magically fly or levitate up to the shell, only to fall upon entering its *antimagic field*. Since none have dared enter the castle and the giants thwart all attempts to reach it, the shell remains a goal as obvious and tempting as it is frustratingly elusive.

Prerequisite: A character must have at least one luck feat (page 72) to gain the benefit conferred by *Olidammara's shell*.

Location Activation: A character who touches and remains in contact with *Olidammara's shell* for 1 full round gains this location's special ability.

Recharge: Any number of characters can potentially make use of *Olidammara's shell*. However, every time a character tries to touch the shell, roll 1d6. On a result of 1, the shell teleports away before being touched, preventing the character from gaining any benefit. Otherwise, the location confers its special ability.

Special Ability (Su): Upon touching *Olidammara's shell*, a character gains a bit of the luck of the trickster deity. She gains five extra luck rerolls, each of which can be used only once.

Duration: The benefits of *Olidammara's shell* are both temporary and whimsical. Whenever a character gains the benefit of the location, the DM should roll 1d6 twice, multiplying the result of one die roll by the other. After that number of days have passed, the special ability ends and the character loses any remaining bonus luck rerolls conferred by the location.

Variation: *Olidammara's shell* might appear anywhere that is exotic, that is considered to be lucky, or that requires extraordinary skill or luck to reach. Such a location might be a patch of four-leafed clovers, a tiny island in the middle of the ocean, the top of an earthen spire jutting from a

flat plain, the peak of a ruined tower, or the depths of a wyvern's lair, as long as it appeals to Olidammara's sense of humor. The bard of the gods enjoys watching the drama surrounding his shell play out. He might even appear in disguise to start spreading rumors of the shell's latest location.

For even greater enjoyment, sometimes Olidammara surrounds the shell with magical effects in addition to *antimagic field*. Spells such as *antipathy, blade barrier, fire shield, prismatic wall,* and *sympathy* are favorites of the trickster deity.

Ability Value: 1,000 gp.

OTYUGH HOLE

Beneath the cells and barred yards of Saint's Cudgel prison, below even its darkest, most secret torture pit, lies an unfinished earthen basement that holds a crumbling, ruined well. This fetid ditch is more than just a filthy oubliette—it's the *otyugh hole*, the bottomless black, the "O" hole, a fearful legend among those who claim to fear nothing, and its threat can snap even the maddest rabble-rouser back into line.

The most feared punishment within a prison, castle, or torturer's tower, an *otyugh hole* is a wretched solitary-confinement pit meant to disgust and break the hardest convict. Any who enter face torments of darkness, silence, and dread, but those who survive this ordeal become underworld legends.

Lore: Characters with ranks in Knowledge (local) can research an *otyugh hole* to learn more about it. When a character succeeds on a skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

DC 10: An *otyugh hole* is a prison cesspit where the foulest prisoners are punished.

DC 15: Many forced into *otyugh holes* go mad, die, or simply disappear. Those who emerge intact are heroes among their fellow felons.

DC 20: Some jailers purposely or knowingly allow creatures such as ghouls, slimes, or otyughs access to prisoners thrown into *otyugh holes*.

Description: An *otyugh hole* is a disgusting, lightless pit about 30 feet deep, usually covered with a rusting metal hatch. Crudely dug to serve its purpose or converted from some other ruined shaft, it reeks with the debris and waste that trickles down from above. No sensory stimuli reach

PREY

"Don't look back!"

Rolands turned to look, slowing for just an instant. That was enough. A terrible, huge maw with teeth like swords, enough to supply an entire legion, snapped shut. Rolands—or at least, all of him from the knees up—was gone in a warm, wet spray.

Keel flinched briefly but didn't slow, his fear driving him on faster and faster. The ache in his pounding legs grew to a dull burn, but any fire he felt, he knew, would be a thousand times more forgiving than the titanic thing that pursued. The monstrous beast, all claws and scales and massive teeth, made the ground pitch with its furious pursuit.

Have to keep running. Have to keep going. Almost there, he chanted to himself, a mantra that became harder to believe with each step. Avoiding thick jungle vines and jumping gnarled roots, he ran on. Behind, he could hear trees crack as they tore from the ground, splintering at the terrible lizard's passage. Bounding, tumbling, and dodging, Keel sprinted through the dense vegetation. In bursts, he ran even faster at the close sound of snapping teeth and a powerful, too-near buffet of reeking breath.

A mighty hiss from up ahead gave Keel a rush of hope. As he broke from the tree line, a black expanse of charred and split earth spread before him. From deep red cracks in the scarred land billowed clouds of thick steam. Long, low sighs issued from the earth as though from something angry breathing below.

He had to run even harder now. The thing behind him wasn't being slowed by the jungle; out here it could move even more swiftly. *Faster!* His exhausted legs nearly gave way at the very thought, threatening to pitch him into one of the firelit crevasses. His arms beat the air ahead of him as he threw his body forward with each step. He could hear the thunderous footsteps picking up speed, each bringing with it the sound of shattering obsidian.

Ahead he could see a new wisp of steam starting to rise from a wide gap in the uneven rock. Turning slightly, he ran directly for it. The gash grew closer with terrible slowness.

You're not going to make it. You have to make it. Do it. Do it. Do it! His exhausted mind argued with itself. He didn't even care. It was all instinct now.

Ten feet wide? Fifteen feet wide? More? The gap seemed wider as he neared, the steam from within getting thicker and billowing out faster. Too late to run for another one. It was this or the thing's gut, and Keel wasn't even sure that he'd get the chance to try his luck.

A sizzling hiss rose from the rock ahead, growing louder, more urgent—the sound of something coming to a head. Seeing the broken rim of the gap, partially obscured by steam, Keel threw all his focus into his final steps. Though the hot mist scalded his face, he called on every reserve of will and terror and launched himself into the air above the gap. As he dove for the other side, something slammed against his legs, a shearing snap that rent the sole from his boot and threw him farther.

Keel hit the jagged ground, rolling hard over slicing rocks, as the hissing behind exploded into the air. A deafening roar of frustration and terrible pain split the steam like a physical presence as the geyser erupted beneath the snapping titan lizard. Its neck and head scorched by the superheated water, the beast reared back and crashed to the ground. Keel barreled as far from the noise as he could, then collapsed himself, his lungs screaming, his legs useless. He lay there for a long time, ignoring the light spray of hot water.

When finally the geyser settled and the steam cleared, Keel rose on his arms and looked back. The massive lizard still lay there, its scaled chest heaving slowly as it breathed its last.

Yeah, Keel thought as he tested his legs and awkwardly gained his footing, *just like I planned.*

those forced into an *otyugh hole* except the warm wetness and gagging reek of its knee-deep putridity.

Crude graffiti, scrawled by countless previous inmates, often lines the lower walls of these horrific prisons. Those who have survived an *otyugh hole* can determine who really has endured its torments and who's a liar by asking about such scrawls. One infamous *otyugh hole* bears the frantically scratched name, "Maercson," both a marker and a warning against the tentacled something that lurks behind one of the pit's crumbling walls.

Prerequisite: A character must be 3rd level or higher to gain the special ability conferred by an *otyugh hole*.

Location Activation: Gaining the benefits of an *otyugh hole* requires enduring a full week of existence within it. The difficulty of this achievement depends on the state of the pit, the level of guard activity surrounding it, and the attentiveness of any creatures that scour the pit for food. Gaining access to an *otyugh hole*—a place that officials deny even exists—might be a challenge as well.

One difference between an *otyugh hole* and the other legendary sites described here is that a lawbreaking character might end up visiting (and thus gaining the benefit of) an *otyugh hole* without intentionally seeking it out.

Recharge: While any number of characters could receive its special ability, an *otyugh hole* can grant its benefit only once per week, and only to a single character (since it is a form of solitary confinement). The site gains its power from its exclusivity: Should a large number come to know the pit's details and claim (truly or not) to have weathered its foulness, the exceptional accomplishment of enduring the *otyugh hole* is cheapened and the site's benefits fade.

Special Ability: A character who has endured a week in an *otyugh hole* gains a noticeable edge to his personality, which manifests as a bonus feat chosen from the following list: Extend Rage (see the sidebar), Iron Will, Menacing Demeanor (see the sidebar), or Skill Focus (Intimidate). The character must still meet the normal prerequisite for the feat chosen.

Duration: The emotional scars, and the resulting personality change, resulting from confinement in an *otyugh hole* are permanent.

Ability Value: 3,000 gp.

CONTACTS

As presented in *Dungeon Master's Guide II*, contacts provide characters of any class with allies willing to perform simple tasks and services on their behalf. More than paid hirelings but less than dutiful cohorts, contacts might best be described as dependable friends or acquaintances. PCs have taken the time to become friendly with these individuals and might seek to take advantage of their advice, skills, and abilities.

Contacts can also add new roleplaying opportunities to a campaign. Even if the PCs are merely seeking general advice or a minor bonus on some skill check, a contact can provide such benefits in a more detailed and flavorful manner than exchanges with hirelings and shopkeepers. For example, a character who wants to know about a specific monster might have a conversation with a learned contact; considering the situation from another angle might allow her to reroll a previously failed Knowledge check with the benefit of the contact's aid. Contacts can also provide benefits beyond minor skill and ability bonuses. If the PCs need to deal with the warlike Tongue-gnaw barbarian tribe, approaching a single member and gaining his friendship could secure a friendly introduction to the chief and warnings against acts that might be cultural taboos.

The aid provided by a contact is a service that doesn't cost the contact anything and doesn't jeopardize his life. In general, this aid involves simple, harmless tasks he can perform with ease. What contacts of varying levels consider an easy task, though, depends on their skill level. A 1st-level warrior would never dare enter the ankheg tunnels winding beneath a farmer's fields, but an 18th-level wizard might think nothing of casting a few spells down the creatures' holes to clear out the infestation. *Dungeon Master's Guide II* offers a number of mid-level example contacts, demonstrating the versatility and variety of such allies. This section expands on that concept, presenting additional sample contacts appropriate for characters from the lowest to highest levels.

GAINING A CONTACT

A PC wishing to gain a contact must first select an NPC. If that person's attitude toward the character is worse than helpful, the first step must be to adjust the NPC's attitude

EXTEND RAGE

You are able to maintain your rage longer than most.

Prerequisite: Rage or frenzy ability.

Benefit: Each use of your rage or frenzy ability lasts an additional 5 rounds beyond its normal duration.

Special: You can take this feat multiple times. The effects of multiple feats stack.

This feat first appeared in *Complete Warrior*.

MENACING DEMEANOR [RACIAL]

You can tap into your savage heritage to improve your intimidation techniques.

Prerequisite: Orc blood or orc subtype.

Benefit: You gain a +4 bonus on your Intimidate checks.

This feat first appeared in *Races of Destiny*.

Contacts can provide characters with useful information

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to helpful by making a successful Diplomacy check. (A character can make someone do a favor for him with Intimidate, but he can't gain a long-term contact with this skill.) Once the NPC's attitude is helpful, the player simply declares his intent to make that NPC a contact for his character.

A PC can have a number of contacts equal to her Charisma bonus (minimum one). In addition, a character who joins a guild (*DMG II* 223) gains one extra guild contact. In this system, a character does not automatically gain contacts upon attaining new levels. When a new slot opens for a contact, a PC must find and recruit one in the usual way.

Contacts of Different Levels

While gaining access to contacts has no level requirement, a low-level character is likely to find a high-level NPC much more difficult to impress than one of similar experience. Even if a PC does manage to gain the friendship of a significantly higher-level NPC, that contact might have more pressing responsibilities that prevent her from aiding a low-level character, or limit the number of times her aid might be called on.

The DM might impose a limitation to prevent PCs from acquiring significantly higher-level contacts. In such a case, a character can gain only contacts whose level does not exceed her class level + her Cha modifier. For example, a 3rd-level PC with a Charisma of 14 might be able to gain contacts of up to 5th level; those of 6th level or higher are simply too skilled or busy to respond to her needs.

Contacts of Different Attitudes

The DM should also consider the nature of individual NPCs when determining what contacts a PC might be able to acquire and retain. Even characters of the same class might hold wildly differing outlooks, intentions, or alignments, making them unlikely to work together. If a cleric who serves Heironeous tries to make a contact of a follower of Hextor, he is unlikely to succeed. The Diplomacy skill already takes into account such differences: Only the most charismatic PCs can sufficiently improve the attitude of a character with a wildly opposing philosophy or of a fervent enemy to gain her as a contact. Most characters probably wouldn't want to. Thus, DMs should usually concern themselves more with what contacts would benefit a character than with trying to restrict PCs from gaining contacts they probably wouldn't pursue to begin with.

EXAMPLE CONTACTS

The tables of contacts presented here and in *Dungeon Master's Guide II* offer little more than a rough outline of what abilities such characters might perform. A typical contact won't put himself in danger on the PCs' behalf, so complete details of one's every skill and feat aren't necessary, but a rough outline and general description of the contact's personality can be helpful.

Table 6–1: Sample Low-Level Contacts

Contact	Class	Favors Provided at No Charge	Frequency
Alkjavalk Mornbird	Barbarian 2	Introduction to her tribe's ways	Once
Jariss Astor*	Bard 1	Direct toward best locations in town	1/week
Emry Sharv	Cleric 2	Identify an object's religious significance (see Knowledge [religion])	1/week
Tem of the Crying Sun	Druid 3	Reveal the location of nearest druid circle	Once
Lt. Moira Keener*	Fighter 2	Spar (suggest weapons, techniques, future feats)	1/month
Stone Over Air	Monk 3	Debate philosophy (reroll and aid one failed Knowledge check)	1/month
Abelard Albrecht Volker	Paladin 2	Report misdeeds to higher-ranking members of his faith	Once
Dram Cicaeda	Ranger 1	Draw a map to a nearby location	1/month
Firechild	Sorcerer 2	Spy or scout with familiar	1/month
Catsy Duprei	Wizard 1	Cast *detect magic* or *prestidigitation*	1/week
Joul the Eye*	Adept 3	Divine the future (not magical)	1/month
Timdal "J.C." Bothol	Commoner 2	Report on local rumors or agricultural concerns (see Knowledge [local])	1/week

Table 6–2: Sample Mid-Level Contacts

Contact	Class	Favors Provided at No Charge	Frequency
Wildcat Rodorsson	Barbarian 5	Help train an animal for a purpose (see Handle Animal)	Once
Cynric the Pure	Cleric 5	Provide healing (*cure light wounds*)	1/month
Farhaan Nicabar*	Cleric 6	Smooth over trouble with local authorities	Once
Agosti of the Shadow Shore	Wizard 5	Translate any nonmagical script	1/week
Deogol Knifethrower	Rogue 4	Forge a document	1/month
Nisha of the Many Eyes*	Rogue 7	Gather intelligence about any one local person	Once
Ialdabode	Psion (telepath) 3	Use *read thoughts* on one captive	1/month
Jal Omari	Soulknife 3	Accompany individual on one adventure up to 1 day in length	Once
Orkatz of the Green City	Expert 5	Help research a specific topic (+2 bonus on PC's Knowledge check)	1/week
Vasili the Fat	Expert 5	Appraise an art item, a piece of jewelry, or a gem	1/week

Table 6–3: Sample High-Level Contacts

Contact	Class	Favors Provided at No Charge	Frequency
Dogfish	Barbarian 15	Scout for one day	Once
Glitterdust	Bard 14	Make a Perform check (no bardic music)	Once
Valkus Dun	Cleric 18	Grant access to a temple's resources (use library, holy water, relic, borrow a minor magic item)	Once
Derecho	Druid 16	Divine the will of nature (see Knowledge [nature])	1/month
Einhander	Fighter 13	Make an Intimidate check	Once
The Hundred-Handed	Monk 15	Break an object	1/month
Joras "Death Ender" Mace	Paladin 16	Use *remove disease*	Once
Tien, Green Sunder's Bane	Ranger 17	Reveal a monster's weakness (see Knowledge)	1/month
The Fifth-Story Man*	Rogue 17	Provide access to a location	Once
Xix Zam the Dragon-Eyed	Sorcerer 16	Make a Spellcraft check	1/month
Master Ironhand*	Expert 19	Determine where special materials might be found	Once

*Described more extensively in the accompanying text.

Unless otherwise noted, a contact's skill modifier should equal that NPC's character level + 5. In rare cases (particularly for high-level contacts), this modifier might increase by another +5 to reflect a higher ability score or some other improvement to the skill.

The following entries expand on some of the contacts presented in Tables 6–1 through 6–3, providing more detailed descriptions of their services and attitudes ready for use in your campaign. Expanded characters are noted with an asterisk (*) in their table entries.

Low-Level Contacts

The following low-level contacts expand on three of the entries in Table 6–1: Sample Low-Level Contacts.

Jariss Astor: A flighty elf runaway barely fifty years old, Jariss (CN male elf bard 1) is known for his love of song, dance, and general excess, as well as his numerous unseemly acquaintances. Upbeat, excitable, and easily distracted, Jariss boldly claims to know about all the best parties in town and, for the right price, can get you anything you want.

Those who gain Jariss as a contact can ask him to direct them toward taverns, clubs, black-market dens, and shady dealers of all types once per week. His Knowledge (local) skill check has a +8 bonus.

Characters trying to make Jariss a contact gain a +2 circumstance bonus on their Diplomacy checks if they dance with the incorrigible elf or ply him with alcohol.

Lieutenant Moira Keener: A low-ranking member of the local militia, Moira (LN female dwarf fighter 2) is a no-nonsense officer with an eye for fine weapons. Though straitlaced and dedicated to upholding the law, Moira drops some of her uptightness when training and during practice duels, reveling in the quick-witted strategy she loves.

Characters who make the lieutenant a contact find her willing to spar and offer advice on their fighting technique. This advice might translate into suggestions for more effective weaponry, options to use in combat (such as the Tumble skill or actions such as disarm), or recommendations for future feats. She offers such assistance only once per month. If your campaign requires PCs to pay for training (see *DMG* 197) or retraining (see *PH2* 194), Moira can reduce the necessary time and cost by 25%.

Characters trying to make Moira a contact gain a +2 circumstance bonus on their Diplomacy checks if they express a technical knowledge of combat or fine weaponry. This bonus rises to +5 if they've helped bring a criminal to justice.

Joul the Eye: A strange half-orc with a missing eye—which he frequently replaces with a variety of disturbing baubles—Joul (CE male half-orc adept 3) is dramatic and quick to anger. He claims to foresee the future by interpreting the positions of items moved by his "pet" monstrous spider, Zhul. Although he is largely a con artist, the half-orc's knowledge of mystical forces and of the criminal underworld allows him to imbue his fortune-telling with an element of illicit truth.

Characters who make Joul a contact can ask him to divine their futures or interpret their paths once per month. His answer might merely be a Bluff attempt but usually includes veiled information using Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (local), or Knowledge (the planes). Joul has a +5 bonus on his Bluff check and a +8 bonus on checks involving these three Knowledge skills.

Characters trying to make Joul a contact gain a +2 circumstance bonus on their Diplomacy checks if they seem appropriately disturbed by his missing eye. However, they take a –5 penalty on such checks if they mention any disgust for or aversion to spiders.

Mid-Level Contacts

The following mid-level contacts expand on two of the characters presented in *Dungeon Master's Guide II*. For ease of reference, the table from that book is reproduced on the facing page as Table 6–2: Sample Mid-Level Contacts.

Farhaan Nicabar: A grandfatherly cleric of Pelor, Farhaan Nicabar (NG male human cleric 6) is a well-known local figure, having treated many in times of sickness and presided over the births and weddings of the majority of folk in town. An ever-open ear, a welcoming smile, and an uncanny ability to remember faces and names make the patient priest easy to love, while his years of experience and even temper make him convincing in counsel.

Ever forgiving, Farhaan is willing to use his influence to help people extricate themselves from unseemly circumstances. Employing a wide number of contacts about town, calling in personal favors, and noting his own past aid, the soft-spoken cleric can often calm flaring tempers without even needing to make a Diplomacy check (if one is needed, he has a +13 modifier on the check).

UNDER THE INFLUENCE

The following excerpts come from the diary of young Princess Triela, begun shortly after her arranged wedding to the dark-hearted King Xethor of Aram.

The fourth day of the third month, two days after Triela took up residence in the palace: "There is a particular creature of draconic appearance but no more than the size of a cat who roams the halls of this castle. I have spoken to her, and to my utter joy and amazement, she responded in kind. She calls herself Zoetebak, a pseudodragon and advisor to my husband. I asked her what she advises him on, and she said, 'Being a good man.' I only hope he heeds her advice."

The ninth day of the third month: "Today my lord proclaimed himself protector of children of the realm, and declared that no child would go hungry. The people cheered. The nobles glowered. Zoetebak sat smugly atop a wardrobe, nodding as my lord spoke. I believe this must have been her idea."

The twenty-third day of the fourth month: "I fear the count of Sithran, and have brought him to the attention of Zoetebak. She says she will speak with my lord."

The first day of the fifth month: "Koro, the young captain of the guard, returned today from patrolling Sithran. His reports are dire, but Zoetebak seems unconcerned."

The second day of the fifth month: "Today my husband promoted Koro. Zoetebak looked on with satisfaction."

The seventh day of the fifth month: "I overheard my husband speaking with Zoetebak. She advised him to distribute gold, bread, and water to the orphanages and poverty-stricken parts of the city. He seemed hesitant until she mentioned how it would strengthen the loyalty of his subjects and weaken the power of Sithran. He quickly agreed."

The second day of the ninth month: "Koro today presented the count of Sithran to Xethor in chains. Zoetebak accused him of treason, to which he admitted guilt and begged for leniency. May Heironeous have mercy on his soul."

Characters trying to make Joul a contact gain a +2 circumstance bonus on their Diplomacy checks if they are fellow clerics of Pelor or can tell a good joke.

Nisha of the Many Eyes: The seductive owner of the Peacock's Perch, a high-class tavern and secret den of vice, Nisha (NE female half-elf rogue 7) does business with the elite of both the nobility and the underworld. The halfling slavers aboard the *Four-Armed Kraken*, the sannish runners of the south, the foppish scions of House Goldenbough, and the Lord Mayor himself—Nisha knows them all. With a deadly smile and a sultry saunter, she and her associates can find out anything for a friend.

Characters who make Nisha a contact can entreat her for information about any local personality, drawing on her vast network. This results in her making a Knowledge (local) check with a +12 bonus or a Gather Information check with a +16 bonus. If she can find out nothing about the person in question, such a failed check does not count as a use of her favor. Nisha can perform this service for PCs more than once, but only the first time is free.

Characters trying to make Nisha a contact gain a +2 circumstance bonus on their Diplomacy checks if they have illicit goods to sell and make an agreement to bring similar such goods to her first in future. However, characters with lawful alignments take a –2 penalty on such checks.

High-Level Contacts

The following high-level contacts expand on two of the entries in Table 6–3: Sample High-Level Contacts.

The Fifth-Story Man: A bold thief and incredibly adroit cat burglar, the mysterious figure who calls himself the Fifth-Story Man (N male human rogue 17) is difficult to pin down. What few know is that he steals only items he considers stolen by their current owners, whether gold extorted by a petty crime boss or a royal heirloom captured during an ancient war. In every case, a strange sense of justice pervades the Fifth-Story Man's work.

Characters who track down the Fifth-Story Man and gain his trust might request his aid in unlawful entry. The cat burglar does extensive research before each of his crimes. He is skilled at detecting and avoiding even the cleverest magic trap and knows the richest homes in the city. His assistance might involve climbing a *symbol*-warded wall and throwing down a rope, drugging a guardian monster, or simply mentioning a secret back door.

The most difficult part of gaining the Fifth-Story Man's aid is tracking him down, since he has a high price on his head. Once characters do meet him, though, and convince him that they're not out for his reward, he is quite friendly. Strangely, due to his skewed sense of justice, lawful characters gain a +2 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy checks to deal with the Fifth-Story Man, while those who are openly thieves take a –4 penalty on such checks.

Master Ironhand: Upon first glance, few would guess that Gimbol Ironhand (NG male gnome expert 19) is a famed master crafter. Serious for a gnome and with a keen attention to detail, Master Ironhand is a blacksmith, inventor, geologist, and archeologist of a kind. He has undertaken extensive research into the rarest materials and minerals, as well as into the boneworking and metallurgical techniques of a dozen different cultures, both modern and ancient. Few can match the gnome's skill at working in adamantine, red steel, green steel, mithral, or even dragonhide.

Characters who make Master Ironhand a contact can draw on his knowledge of rich sources of rare minerals or materials. Master Ironhand uses his extensive Appraise, Knowledge (geography), and Profession (blacksmith) skills to provide information about the provenance of a rare item or substance (he receives a +30 bonus on each check).

Characters trying to make Master Ironhand a contact gain a +5 circumstance bonus on their Diplomacy checks if they can show the gnome an item of a material he has never seen before.

ONE HUNDRED SCOUNDREL CHALLENGES

The following selection of story ideas should help inspire a Dungeon Master looking for adventure seeds and ways to incorporate scoundrels into a campaign.

d%	Challenge
01	Talk your way out of a bargain with a kolyarut.
02	Become leader of a thieves' guild.
03	Negotiate peace between a town and a lizardfolk tribe.
04	Recover a stolen museum display, then steal it later for yourself.
05	Track down a kenku thieves' guild.
06	Investigate a connection between city guards and a thieves' guild.
07	Convince a lich to make a powerful magic item.
08	Break into a noble's heavily guarded mansion because you can.
09	Fly to a distant land on the back of a roc.
10	Forge an alliance of gnomes and halflings to attack the larger races.
11	Take a half-orc barbarian to the royal opera.
12	Join a rebellion you don't care about for the sake of someone you love.
13	Convince a group of azers to open up shop in the City of Glass.
14	Bring together lovers separated by their families.
15	Explain to a mummy why you have a right to enter its tomb.
16	Fake the assassination of a monarch you despise.
17	Attend a ball in disguise without the use of magic.
18	Distract the city watch as a gang fight occurs nearby.
19	Convince a horde of hobgoblins that you're an avatar of Erythnul.
20	Smuggle a bored prince or princess out of the country.

21 Spy on and participate in a secret druid ritual.
22 Pass a message to an inmate in a secure prison.
23 Retrieve a gnome relic from the belly of a purple worm.
24 Lead a group of drow to the surface so they can raid.
25 Prevent a tyrant from coming to power.
26 Place a commoner on the throne.
27 Convince a wizard her magic has stopped working.
28 Track down a mortally wounded ranger's dead animal companion to bury with him.
29 Peacefully get a wing of gargoyles to leave a castle.
30 Infiltrate and expose a wererat den that the city guards don't believe exists.
31 Tame Thunderhoof, prince of the hippogriffs.
32 Start a thieves' guild to compete with an existing one.
33 Wrangle a panicking dire bear out of a crowded city.
34 Reunite a half-orc with the parent who didn't raise him.
35 Convince dwarf miners to unearth an ancient creature.
36 Kill a sorcerer before he can cast a spell.
37 Ambush the tax shipment of an evil empire.
38 Convert a cleric to a different faith.
39 Break a popular rebel out of prison.
40 Find the answer to a question said to be impossible to discern.
41 Make a false claim to the imperial throne.
42 Convince rival gangs to join together to form a larger thieves' guild.
43 Convince a githyanki slaver to free a valuable captive.
44 Free a condemned prisoner from the gallows.
45 Capture a tyrannosaurus for a wealthy city zoo.
46 Bring a militant druid into the largest city.
47 Perpetrate a con on a devil, raksasha, or yugoloth.
48 Defeat an elf in an archery contest by cheating.
49 Reveal the doppelganger hiding in the city senate.
50 Enter politics.
51 Escape a deserted island.
52 Lose a hound archon ranger.
53 Convince a paladin to keep an illegal or immoral secret.
54 Stop a group of city leaders from opening a portal to the Far Realm.
55 Purchase a storm giant's castle without gold, gems, or magic items.
56 Become the leader of an assassins' guild.
57 Befriend a gray render.
58 Convince a red dragon to give up a piece of its hoard.
59 Learn the location of a lost vault from a greedy ghost.
60 Deliver a love letter from a surface dweller to a drow in a subterranean city.
61 Compel a cleric of Nerull to return a lost friend to life.
62 Sing an insulting song about the king to his face—and live to tell about it.
63 Raise funds from a gold dragon to start a thieves' guild.
64 Assassinate a monarch you like.
65 Court a noble scion under his parents' noses.
66 Uncover who is sending death threats to a hated public official.
67 Bargain for passage through a behir's territory.
68 Kidnap a wizard's familiar and hold it for ransom.
69 Take a mistakenly teleported merfolk back to a distant ocean in less than a day.
70 Convince a barbarian she's really a sorcerer who can cast powerful spells.
71 Perform for an army of orcs.
72 Stop a vigilante from killing thieves' guild members.
73 "Borrow" a hag eye from a covey of sea hags.
74 Expose the beloved mayor as an evil cultist slowly poisoning the populace.
75 Compel a babau and a hound archon to work together against a legion of devils.
76 Join a temple of St. Cuthbert as a spy for a temple of Olidammara.
77 Track the source of a crime spree back to an ethereal filcher.
78 Put a monk on the throne of a barbarian kingdom and keep her there.
79 Join an order of wizards without being able to cast spells.
80 Disguise a wealthy merchant as a pauper to let him watch customers in the market.
81 Convince deep dwarves, derro, and duergar to cooperate in opening the lost Vault Beneath the Mountain.
82 Infiltrate a drow city to assassinate a svirfneblin traitor.
83 Help an adventurous prince or princess escape the palace.
84 Forge a strike force of half-elves who report directly to the elf king.
85 Convince a treant to leave the doomed forest it has occupied for centuries.
86 Destroy a thieves' guild.
87 Win a fighting tournament using a weapon you're not proficient with.
88 Assassinate an imprisoned assassin. Make it look like it's not a murder.
89 Enter a scintillating color pool on the Astral Plane.
90 Hunt down a spellthief and bring him to a wizards' guild for justice.
91 Steal the sacred scrolls of a clan of ninjas.
92 Smuggle a vampire into a city.
93 Use your soul as a bargaining chip in a deal with a devourer.
94 Broker a peace agreement between dwarves and orcs.
95 Explore the burial city of the elder elves.
96 Ambush a scout-led group of irregulars.
97 Back out of a bargain with a powerful crime syndicate—and survive.
98 Bring a choir of harpies to sing at a bards' college.
99 Persuade a red dragon to become a dracolich.
100 Convince an archon to break a contract.

ABOUT THE DESIGNERS

MIKE McARTOR and F. WESLEY SCHNEIDER are associate editors for *Dragon* magazine. Mike was one of the designers for *Spell Compendium*, while *Complete Scoundrel* is Wes's first design job for Wizards of the Coast.

Fair Fights are for Suckers

In a world filled with monsters and villains, a little deception and boldness go a long way. You know how to take advantage of every situation, and you don't mind getting your hands dirty. Take the gloves off? *Ha!* You never put them on! You infuriate your foes and amaze your allies with your ingenuity, resourcefulness, and style. For you, every new predicament is an opportunity in disguise, and with each sweet victory your notoriety grows. That is how legends are made.

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For use with these DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® core books
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